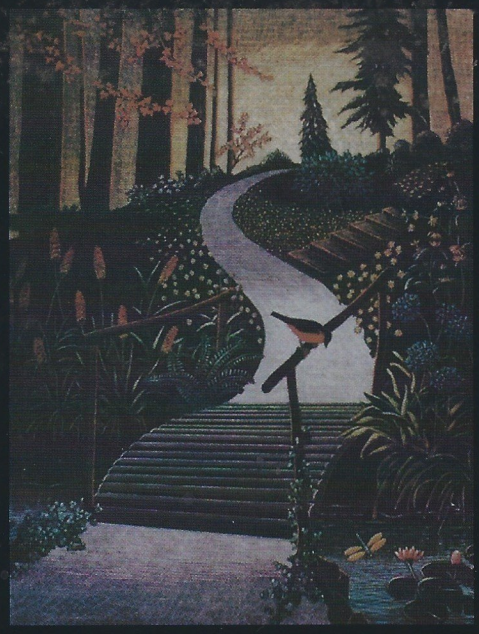
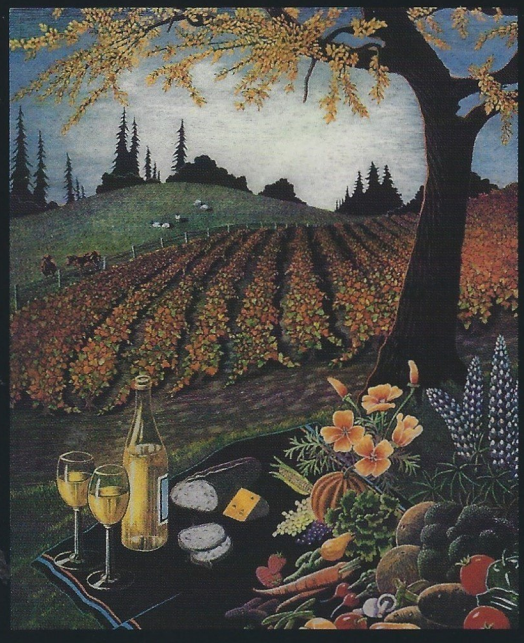


Mastering the Art of Scratchboard

by

Norman Gaddini



Mastering the Art of Scratchboard

by

Norman Gaddini

with

Margie Wilson

WORDSWORTH™ Publishing • Sonoma County, California

This book was written with and edited by
Margie Wilson

All illustrations and drawings in this book and on the cover are
by Norman Gaddini unless otherwise stated.

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Dedication

to Betsy Shimmel,
my Santa Rosa Junior College teacher,
who guided me in the fundamentals of fine art.

Acknowledgments

To Mabel Palmer,
for sticking with me for 30 years in our art gallery in Occidental,

and

To my wonderful parents, Ernie and Ann Gaddini,
who always encouraged my efforts in art,

and

To my brother, Weaver, who always appreciated my paintings.

Thanks

To my many good friends in the Art Workshop and Artists' Round Table
for their demonstrations and encouragement,

and

To Margie Wilson,
for her friendship, skill, and patience in writing this book.

Thank you all!

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Author's Note

"Go for Originality"

I have always liked to experiment and invent, which I did in my farming experience of growing apricots for 40 years. On one occasion, my brother Weaver and I were faced with a harvest that was clearly to be over one month late; the trees were already propped. They had to be watered or would never size for market. We could not take down the props. My mother, Weaver, and I were sorely depressed, and Weaver told me, "Go out and see what we can do." So, I went into the drying orchard, took a garden hose, and let it run all night. Amazingly, the next morning, the water had soaked the ground in about a 30-foot circle. This was the answer, but no long hoses or tubes were available in this country. They were being used for the first time in Israel, and my plumber was able to get them for us, which saved the crops with the largest size 'cots we had ever grown.

Then, I invented the first 'cot and peach cutting machine which cut and pitted fruit at sixty per minute. It is still used today by several canneries in Oakland.

In tractor work, dust is always a problem, so I had to invent a dust mask. After several failures, I discovered the big secret — instead of pushing hot air to the mask, I reversed the action, and the vacuum of the tractor engine pulled air from the mask, through a wet sponge and filter. Although this patent has long expired, this mask is now used in industry to maintain sterile air in the computer industry.

Then, I invented the first ice cream machine to go into a home freezer. This is still available.

So, in art, I invented the process of drawing a picture in sepia ink and using clorox to bleach for highlights and texture.

In scratchboard, I invented the pin in a chuck handle for fine detail. It never needs sharpening, turns circles, and is much superior to marketed scribes.

Thirty years ago, I started painting with oils, watercolors and acrylics, but when I saw a black-and-white scratchboard of a deer at a big art show in Santa Rosa, I was very impressed by its great detail and strong black-and-white contrast. Since I loved detail, I said, "That's for me!"

Scratchboard was not available in Santa Rosa, so I had to go to San Francisco to buy it. I found it at a large art supply store called Flax's. At the time, no one was doing or teaching scratchboard, so I had to teach myself.

For the past 25 years, I have specialized in scratchboard. Along the way, I discovered a new scratching tool, better than you can buy — a common pin, which I have described above.

I believe I was also the first to add full color to black-and-white scratchboard pictures.

Thus, the urge to improvise and invent goes on!

So, painters, be daring!

Try something new and different and surprise yourself!

Norman E. Gaddini

Editor's Note

Scratchboard is a fascinating medium, yet it is a relatively new art process. Its roots go back as far as Cro-Magnon man. Some of humankind's earliest artistic endeavors involved scratching pictures into rock or bone. More recent developments, like etching, wood engraving, and scratchboard, are continuations on that theme. With the development of modern printing methods, this medium has been recognized as ideally suitable for black-and-white illustrations, and is slowly becoming accepted as a fine arts medium. As a form of artistic expression, artists who "scratch" find that its dramatic effects create great interest.

Wood engraving was the predominant method for reproducing illustrations in the 19th century. However, in the late 19th century, in order to meet the demand for illustrations in the rapidly proliferating books, newspapers, magazines, and advertisements, it became necessary to develop a rendering style to meet deadlines. Scratchboard illustration filled this niche. It provided good contrast without the need for halftones, which were difficult to reproduce on poor quality newsprint. It was the best form of illustration for the printers of that time. Wood and metal engraving were widely used to reproduce paintings and photographs for printing, but it was time-consuming, expensive, and required working in reverse.

Scraperboard and scratchboard, the British and American terms respectively, are basically stiff cards coated with a thin layer. Several versions of cardboard coated first with chalk, then with India ink, were developed in England, Austria, and Italy. Fine lines could be scraped or scratched through the ink, simulating wood engraving. These new materials eliminated the need to work in reverse, were easy to correct, and allowed artists to work on a larger scale, as the fine linework of scratchboard art could easily be photographically reduced for reproduction.

Working with scratchboard has many advantages, one of which is the elimination of having to work in reverse, as in other forms of engraving. It also allows an artist to work at a much larger scale, having the original artwork be photographically reduced to a desired size for reproduction. When reduced in size, it retains — if not enhances — the delicacy of the lines, and costs no more to print that any black-and-white drawing.

Scratchboard was widely used for advertising and editorial illustration from the 1920s to 1950s and has seen something of a renaissance in the last two decades. More and more artists are discovering its practical advantages and artistic power. Its graphic impact, subtle shading possibilities, and ease of use make it a very appealing medium of ever-increasing popularity.

In more recent times, several artists working in this medium have gained notoriety. Most notably is Dutchman Maurits Cornelis Escher [better known as M.C. Escher], who skillfully engraved his intricate visions in lithographs, woodcuts, and wood engravings. He achieved a brilliant effect by applying India ink to a hard, thick flint-glazed card which when dried was scraped or cut; however, occasionally his scraping tool would pick up fibers. Escher's intricate, interlaced images and amazing perspectives beguiled the eye and mind, and have been utilized to teach various art techniques, including scratchboard.

Although scratchboard is primarily a black-and-white medium, many of us had an experience early in life with a simple kind of color scratchboard when we were in grammar school art class. I recall my art teacher instructing us to color a white piece of cardboard with a variety of colored wax-

type crayons. We covered these marks with either black crayon — or in later years, a layer of India ink or tempera paint. We then used a sharp instrument [in the younger years, it was an opened paper clip], to scratch off the black ink in a design, revealing the multitude of colors underneath. It seemed like magic . . . and was great fun to create such beautiful results!

Any artist who chooses to undertake this medium should develop his/her own unique style. You will find, through experimentation, your own approach and preferences. In a final analysis, an artist's relationship with scratchboard will be intimate, personal, and unique. Hopefully, you will find that this medium will inspire you and allow you to reach a new level of artistic satisfaction, and if you so desire, professional success.

Ultimately, a good rendering in scratchboard has the same elements as a good drawing in any medium: the subject, the design, the artist's personal interpretation, and the artist's technical mastery of the medium.

In this book, master scratchboard artist Norman Gaddini is our guide. An excellent and accomplished technician in the medium of scratchboard, Norman clearly explains from start to finish, and in great detail, the basic principles of this exciting and creative art form. Having worked as a scratchboard artist for more than three decades, he has developed techniques which have been fundamental in the classification of scratchboard as a fine art. Norman not only reveals his "secrets" and techniques, but he also explains what scratchboard is, how a black-and-white picture is created in scratchboard, the equipment and tools required, how to apply full color, how to mat and frame your finished scratchboard picture . . . and more!

Whether you are a student, teacher, artist, or illustrator specializing in scratchboard or looking for a new technique, or you just wish to learn more about this amazing technique, Norman's straightforward presentation is both a practical and contemporary guide to the medium. Enjoy!

Margie Wilson

Spring 2002

Special thanks to Rachel Chiverton
of Armadillo Art for her help in unraveling
the intricacies of the history of British Process
Boards in the "History of Scratchboard" section.

The History of Scratchboard

Compared to other media — oil painting, watercolor, pen and ink, acrylics, and crayon — scratchboard is a new medium. But, to leave one's mark on a surface is a natural, primal instinct. If you look at artifacts and rock or cave drawings which are tens of thousands of years old, you will find lines incised into bone, stone, or earth. This drawing was a natural way for people to communicate and to illustrate what they wished others to understand or see. Scratching lines into a surface — whether drawing, decorating, or imparting information — is the basis of hieroglyphics, petroglyphs, pictographs, and cuneiform.

No matter what the surface, human beings seem compelled to leave their mark or to engrave: children love to draw on frosty windows or in the sand at the beach, graffiti artists leave their message or name in a wide variety of visible locations, and many people carve or etch their initials or a sweetheart's name in wood or on a boulder. Others leave their message or handprint on the dirty surface of an automobile or in wet cement.

Whatever the form of expression, this primitive method of communicating by engraving has profoundly evolved over the centuries, reflecting technological advances and cultural conditions. Tools, materials, and processes have become increasingly sophisticated and controlled. One might venture to say that civilization's progress is reflected in the development of the graphic arts.

The development of an oral language in early humans was also essential to improving existing communication, which up to that point, was done using grunts and sign language; this left quite a bit of room for interpretation. Communication was further refined by the invention of the alphabet. Illustrating words was the next step, for words can be greatly enhanced by images.

As mankind progressed, so did written communication and literacy. There was a demand for new ways to communicate. At first, hand-scribed books were created, but the needs of a growing, literate population had to be addressed.

Early forms of communication included relief painting, which is credited to the Chinese as early as the 3rd century B.C., and block printing, which has been found in Egyptian artifacts dated in the 2nd century B.C. By the 9th century A.D., woodcut engraving was a popular way to reproduce information and multiple images. With Gutenberg's movable-type printing press invented in the mid-15th century, woodcut illustration found a natural outlet in mass production.

Over the years, there continued to develop other printing processes and methods of reproducing images where a line was incised, filled with ink, and then printed. Wood and metal engraving and etching were often used to reproduce artwork which existed in other media [such as sculpture or painting]. By the late 18th century, hand-produced wood engraving became widely used, as did lithography; the earlier line work of the intaglio printing presses could not reproduce artwork with the same subtle halftone gradations of lithography. However, despite the advancements that were occurring, different printing presses were still required to separately print the artwork and type.

By the late 19th century, illustrated magazines were in great demand. There was also an unprecedented volume of posters, books, handbills, newspapers, and other official documents which made hand-engraving and lithography techniques both artistically and economically impractical.

Scratchboard, also known as Scraperboard [in England] and *Sgraffito*, first appeared on the scene as an answer to this greater demand in printmaking. It was a satisfactory and economically viable means to reproduce an image for mass printing.

The first version of scratchboard was introduced around 1880 by blockmakers in Milan, Paris, and Vienna. It was simply cardboard coated with hard wax and specially-prepared chalk. The cardboard could be embossed with a grained pattern, which was then painted in or rolled with black India ink in specific areas which were to be shaded, or it was completely coated over its entire surface. Lines which expressed subtle changes in shading or areas of white could be engraved, scraped, or incised. This could be easily photographed onto a metal plate and made into a line block for a printer.

Who is credited as being first to develop the new artistic medium of scratchboard? Some credit Karl Angerer, an Austrian lithographer from Vienna, around 1864. He applied a layer of chalk onto a cardboard substrate and then painted it with black ink. Others credit the earliest form of *scraperboard* in Europe to an experiment by English photographer David Dickson. Dickson, who lived in Lowestoft, had applied India ink to glass and then scraped it away as a method of retouching photographic plates. Experimenting further, Dickson invented a special cardboard-based surface embossed with hard wax and coated with chalk and a photographic emulsion. In America, Charles J. Ross, a printer from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, began producing his "Ross boards" in the United States around 1880.

Artists who began using the new medium of scratchboard found it to be an inexpensive alternative to metal plates and lithographic stone. Drawing directly onto the scratchboard, corrections could be quickly made. Furthermore, since the artist was now scratching lines into a clay surface rather than carving blocks of wood, the artist's control of what he was rendering was greatly enhanced and improved. By the late 1890s, scratchboard became very popular with commercial illustrators who drew advertisements or illustrated other journalism.

In 1939, with the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, all supplies of "scraperboard" were cut off in England. In fact, all imports were so severely cut off that the Stanley Dixon Advertising Agency looked into producing its own board. The agency became involved with British Process Boards Ltd. ["BPB"], whose original directors were Horsfield & Ingram. Beginning in 1942, the agency made several attempts using different formulas to emulate the Schwaab scratchboard created in Austria, which was preferred by professionals. In 1944, BPB found the solution, and the resulting, trademarked EssDee [EssDee is a play on the initials of Stanley Dixon and is also known as "Essdee"] brand of British scraperboard soon became considered a premium paper-based scratchboard, some of the highest quality produced in the world; today, it is accepted as the standard for excellence. The Dixon family remained involved with BPB until 1986.

From 1944 until 1986, BPB was located in Sheffield, England; in 1986, its facilities moved to Kidderminster. The company was privately-owned by an individual until the late 1970s, when Oasis Art & Craft Products Ltd. purchased it. Until mid-1999, BPB was owned and operated by Oasis. At that time, Oasis was bought by ColArt [manufacturers of Winsor & Newton paint]. The former owners of Oasis kept the scraperboard production part of the company and set up a new company to handle the fine art and educational products — including EssDee scraperboard — which were not included in the ColArt buyout of Oasis. The name of that new company was "Educational Art & Craft Products"; it was also located in the United Kingdom.

The manufacture of EssDee scraperboard is now under the Educational Art & Craft Products "umbrella". For tax reasons, British Process Boards Limited was dissolved on March 28, 2000. Nevertheless, EssDee premium scratchboard is still being manufactured on the same BPB machines, to the same BPB specifications. It is available in black [pre-coated], white [uncoated, for those who

wish to coat the board with their own India-style ink], and grained patterns. In short, all that has changed with BPB is its corporate structure.

It should be noted that European schoolchildren work with scratchboard like American schoolchildren use finger-paints. With this growing specialty market, many companies have created entire lines of scratchboard which are lightweight [10-, 12-, and 15-point thicknesses] and are considered "student grade" as compared to the thicker [usually a 40-point thickness], more professional grade used by fine artists.

Today, there are numerous companies producing scratchboard, several specializing in children's products. Among the more notable companies producing paper-based scratchboard is the Scratch-Art® Company of Avon, Massachusetts, which has been manufacturing scratchboard for about 35 years. They make a variety of products, including Scratch-Brite® [silver- or gold-colored foil laminated to a black-coated, heavy board, which creates dramatic, metallic effects when cut], five varieties of 12-point textured scratchboard [pre-inked boards with pebble, stipple, linen, diamond, or canvas texture under the black coating], and especially fun for children — a variety of Scratch-Art® paper, including a stained glass version. Scratch-Art® also imports a more professional grade, 40-point scratchboard manufactured in France called Paris®.

Another company is Canson, a French company established in 1557. In 1986, it created an American subsidiary to distribute EssDee scratchboard in the U.S. because of its purchase of Morilla, an American company which had previously been distributing EssDee in the States for approximately three decades. Canson-U.S. purchased EssDee directly from the United Kingdom from 1986 until 1996. Canson also sells its own brand of both lightweight and heavyweight scratchboard, which is manufactured by a European company to Canson's specifications.

Armadillo Art & Craft [in New Jersey] has been the exclusive U.S. importer of EssDee since 1996. Once Armadillo began to import EssDee, Canson then began purchasing it directly from Armadillo. In mid-2000, to simplify matters, Canson agreed to transfer all of its scratchboard business to Armadillo; Canson no longer distributes EssDee scraperboard.

Within the last fifteen years, there has been an important, new development: the manufacturing and marketing of a new surface for artists called Claybord™. Clay formulations applied directly to a Masonite panel were first used by artist Charles Ewing in 1973. This new surface is comparable in nature and composition to the traditionally-prepared wood panels of the Renaissance era and lends itself naturally to scratchboard. It is an important development since scratchboard was originally used for a short-term purpose — illustration. Long-term display, moisture, problems with certain pigments, and various other concerns were discovered over the years, especially as scratchboard began to be used by fine artists.

Claybord™ is produced by Ampersand Art Supply in Austin, Texas, and is currently available in stores throughout the United States, Canada, Australia, Japan, Great Britain, and France; it is also available through mail order catalogues and on the internet. Many artists consider it to be the ultimate scratchboard because it is durable and does not tear, crack, or bend like paper-based scratchboard, nor does it have problems with moisture.

Despite the obvious advantages of working with scratchboard, it was infrequently used until the mid-1920s. Oftentimes, artists who wished to obtain pieces of scratchboard had to create their own versions. Nevertheless, from the early 1900s through the 1950s, many newspaper and magazine

illustrations — both editorial and advertising — as well as illustrations for adventure and science fiction pulp magazines, were done in scratchboard.

Today, commercial artists continue to create contemporary, professional scratchboard [and related media] illustrations; they are widely used in the advertising and publishing industries. You can frequently find them in medical and scientific publications because of the delicate precision and fine detail which can be achieved. Scratchboard drawings are also used to illustrate editorials, science fiction, fantasy, and wildlife. Scratchboard also has a natural niche — for small spot illustrations — because it reveals structure, form, and detail so well.

Within the last two decades, there has been a noticeable and dramatic increase in the number of scratchboard artists, and the popularity of scratchboard as a viable artistic medium continues to grow. More schools include it in their art curriculum. This revival in scratchboard's popularity seems natural considering its practical advantages, its dynamic impact, and its many possible aesthetic varieties. One possible reason for this increased interest in this older technique in today's fast-paced, computer-age: scratchboard illustrations, especially those used to market products in newspaper advertising, reduce and reproduce much better than halftone photographs. And, in appearance, some scratchboard techniques create the illusion of woodcut and wood or metal engraving, both of which are more time-consuming and ultimately more costly.

Furthermore, scratchboard can uniquely combine the techniques and effects of other media as well, such as pen and ink, painting, intaglio printmaking, and even some forms of sculpture. Therefore, a wide range of styles is possible when using scratchboard: from a meticulous realism to nearly abstract. However, the realism found in scratchboard drawings generally tends to be more stylized and less photographic.

It is interesting and important to note before ending a discussion of the history of scratchboard that some of the earliest scratching methods created thousands of years ago are still being utilized by modern artists. Ceramists use *sgraffito* when they scratch through colored slips to expose clay beneath the surface before firing. Scrimshaw, which has been a form of artistic expression since prehistoric times, became a popular art form during the 18th and 19th centuries when whalers on long sea voyages passed the time by scratching images on whale bones and teeth. Today's scrimshaw artists still use sharp tools to scratch out images on bone or ivory, filling these scratches with carbon black, tallow, or other modern pigments. Steel, iron, bronze, and copper continue to be enhanced by decorative metal engraving. Printmaking — both metal plates and wood carving — are also viable modern art forms.

Printmaking has, of course, evolved with technological advances. With the development of photography and offset lithography, an artist's work can now be photographed, converted to plates, and beautifully reproduced in virtually any quantity on various types of presses (lithography, web, and so forth), or even scanned and converted to halftones, utilizing various levels of dot pattern, as seen in books and newspapers — and even on the worldwide web — today.

It is ironic that thousands of years ago, mankind began by communicating and scratching his thoughts and images onto earthen clay, and with scratchboard, we have come full circle. Scratchboard continues to be an interactive medium which inherently allows for the development of an artist's unique style and for new forms of stylistic expression, especially since the possibilities and the effects which can be obtained are endless. A finished scratchboard illustration will reflect an individual artist's vision, passion, creative imagination, and skill. Notwithstanding, an artist's technique and technical command will, of course, evolve with work, patience, and persistence. *– m.w.*

How is Scratchboard Made?

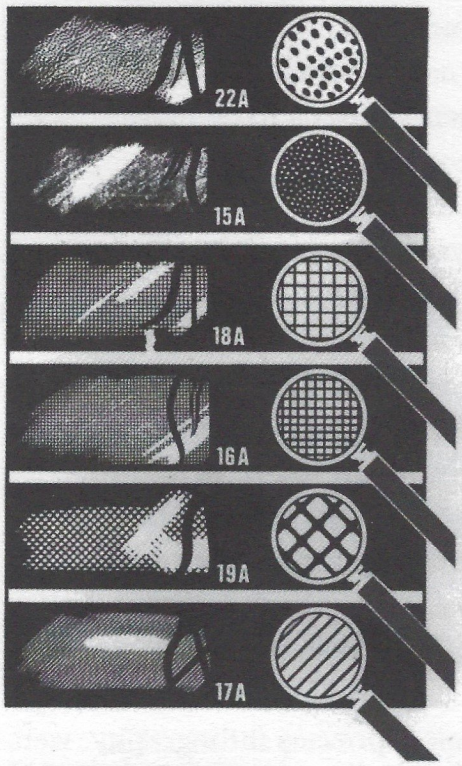
There are a number of commercial, **paper-based scratchboards** available, and they differ in quality.

Scratchboard needs a suitable backing board that allows for a high quality, dense china clay deposit. This is a very wet process. The mixture is of white china clay, water, and natural gelatin glue. Some scratchboard manufacturers also use glycerine and kaolin. The mixture contains chemicals which maintain suspension and retard bacterial and fungal growth.

As the board is manufactured, each board is very wet after it is coated with the wet clay mixture and must be allowed to dry naturally before further coats are applied to achieve the desired depth of clay. When all layers are applied, the board is calendered and compressed using extreme pressure. If the board is to be textured, it is passed through embossing rollers at this stage; if not, it is left smooth.

If the board is to be simply black, it is then passed through the black process. A black surface is made from chemical black dye. It has low levels of pigment. It is then bonded to the surface, again using a natural gelatin.

Generally, each board is handmade. Most boards are made of a hard cardboard which has no wood pulp. The white surface is deep and hard, but the board is pliable, so much care is taken not to fracture or bend the board during manufacturing or transit. This fragile surface will be very responsive to inking and scraping. Because of this, many scratchboard artists mount their scratchboard pieces onto another piece of cardboard as backing.



Grained and stippled paper-based scratchboard. from leaflet, "British Scraper Board" from British Process Boards, Limited. From top to bottom: top — coarse irregular grained stipple; fine, sand-grained stipple; [the next 3) cross-embossed screened; bottom — diagonally screened, all on black.

There are different finished surfaces of scratchboard available: plain black or white, grained white or black, and stippled white or black. A beginner might wish to purchase a trial packet, which includes a few samples of various sizes.

The black ink on boards more than a few months old does tend to crack, preventing an artist from achieving crisp sharp lines when scraping.

If you want high quality, professional results, use a superior quality scratchboard.

Claybord™, as mentioned earlier in the text, is a new commercially manufactured material that is quickly becoming a favorite of many professional scratchboard artists. This archival surface can be used to effectively add contrast, texture, tonal value, and fine detail, and most importantly, moisture is not an issue. Originally created by artist Charles Ewing, Claybord is a tempered, fine art hardboard panel manufactured in America. It is known for its durability, rigidity, and purported to last more than 200 years. The panel surface is sealed completely with an acrylic polymer emulsion. There are several varieties produced, each with

different surfaces and each with unique characteristics. The varieties preferred by scratchboard artists are: Original (smooth), Black, and Textured. By special request directly from the manufacturer, an artist can receive a container of Clay Mixture, which can be applied to a smooth clay surface to add texture.

The manufacturing of smooth Claybord begins with a ⅛"-thick hardboard, museum-quality, wood panel commonly known by the trade name "Masonite" [invented by William H. Mason in 1924] that is coated with a pH-neutral, acid-free, absorbent kaolin clay and then sealed. The clay ground is primarily a "highly refined quartz silica free kaolin clay mixed in polymer binding agents". Next, it is then lightly sanded to create a delicate surface texture. Being mineral-based, its surface retains flexibility, will not crack or flake, and will not gradually yellow or become brittle when exposed to UV rays, like most organic papers. All Claybord panels are archivally prepared, pH neutral, and acid-free.

This clay coating may be exposed in a variety of ways; it may be scratched, washed, painted, inked, erased, and rubbed. You can experiment exposing the clay surface by using scratchboard tools, hobby knives, razor blades, etching tools, sandpaper, steel wool, erasers, cotton swabs, sponges, paper towels, palette knives, wire brushes — whatever you wish to try.

"Claybord Black" is my personal favorite. It is made by applying a coating of India ink over a piece of Claybord. It is perfectly inked and has the advantage of not tearing, cracking, or bending like paper-based scratchboard. It allows scratching with precision and ease. Furthermore, once your artwork is complete, you can add color easily or seal your work using a varnish or fixative, then frame your artwork without having to use glass, so any worry about glare is eliminated. There is also a spray fixative that can be purchased which dissolves fingerprints. Many consider Claybord Black to be the ultimate scratchboard.

What is the "Clay" in Scratchboard?

Clay can naturally be found in many different colors and particle sizes. Clay originates as deposits in the earth, created when igneous rock particles are ground over time. These ground rock particles eventually become sedimentary layers at the bottoms of riverbeds, lakes, and oceans. Some people refer to clay simply as "earth".

Kaolin is a special type of clay used by ceramicists for making porcelain. It is the primary choice for a clay art surface because of its small particle size, its whiteness, and the fact that it is nonabrasive.

Today, there are two primary types of clay surfaces manufactured and used by scratchboard artists. One is water-soluble and has a cardboard or paper support. Its smooth, dense surface is created when dry clay particles are mixed with water and compressed between smooth rollers; examples of this type of scratchboard are Canson Scratchboard, Paris Scratchboard, and Essdee Scratchboard. The other utilizes water-insoluble binders and a hardboard support; if sanded, it is known as Claybord™, or if it is neither sanded nor compressed, it is known as Claybord™ Textured.

Scratchboard art created on either type of scratchboard can be accentuated by the use of pigments, but the ease of scratching and the basic versatility differs.

Advantages of Using Scratchboard

There are many reasons to use scratchboard as an artist's medium of choice. First, it is a direct drawing method. In other words, you can see the final positive black and negative white areas at all times during the process of scratching and drawing. This is not true in wood or metal printmaking media, which in fact, oftentimes can be quite frustrating for an artist since mistakes are often realized only after an extended inking and printing process produces the finished product. Also, it is laborious and time-consuming to cut a metal plate or wood block.

Many of the techniques of line and texture which can be achieved with scratchboard, such as fine detail or cross-hatching, are virtually impossible when using woodcut or linoleum. In fact, in these latter two media, errors are often not reversible. And, since drawings are generally printed backwards, an artist must think "in reverse"; this is not the case with scratchboard. Scratchboard also not only allows a greater variation of lines and unique effects, but also allows for extremely clean, tight, controllable lines that are not possible with regular drawing paper.

When using scratchboard, only one original is produced, as with drawing with pen and ink. However, its reproduction quality is excellent and economical, making it a natural for commercial, mass production of scratchboard illustrations in newspapers or magazines, especially when using a cheaper quality paper which absorbs ink easily. A scratchboard illustration maintains its details during the printing process because of its crisp lines.

Why I have Switched to Claybord After 30 Years of Using Essdee

1. Claybord is rigid Masonite vs. Essdee's fragile cardboard.
2. Claybord is less costly.
3. Claybord's clay base is harder than Essdee's chalk and permits dense scratching without crumbling or shattering.
4. Claybord is waterproof and Essdee is not.
5. Claybord can be framed without glass for better vision; Essdee cannot.
6. Claybord comes in a size that can be cut to a standard frame size with no waste. Essdee's size results in waste.

Is Scratching a Tedious Process?

Scratchboard is not a tediously slow technique. I can scratch 150, 3/8" lines (about one-sixteenth inch apart) in one minute.

Equipment and Materials

One of the great things about scratchboard is the minimal amount of supplies needed. In fact, the tools and materials are not only simple but also highly accessible. Choosing and using the proper equipment and materials helps you efficiently produce high-quality artwork.

Types of Scratchboard

For many years, I used English Essdee scratchboard, which consists of a cardboard base covered with a thick layer of white chalk made from crushed eggshells. This white surface may be painted with black and/or colored ink, which is then scratched through to etch your picture.

As mentioned earlier, there are currently four different finishes available: white or black plain, white or black stippled, and white or black grained. Grained and stippled boards are generally used by more advanced students. Stippling is created mechanically, with its patterns embossed into the material. Black stippled boards can be worked exactly as plain boards, but using the knife or tool blade rather than the tip and stroking more or less lightly across the surface creates graduated tones or screen effects. The tops of any indentation thus become white, leaving the pattern clearly defined in the black. Using stippled boards allows the artist to create a wide range of shading effects. However, I recommend you get the smooth surface type, especially if you are a beginning scratcher.

I am currently using a black-coated, smooth-surfaced scratchboard made in Texas. It is called "Claybord" and is made of Masonite, onto which the clay is deposited. Both the English and Masonite types of scratchboard are high quality boards which provide a very thin coating for easier and cleaner scratching.

High quality scratchboard can be finely cross-hatched and will not flake.

Of course, there are less costly boards, but they are made of thinner cardboard, have a thinner chalk coating, and are more flexible. Due to their thinner chalk coating, a scratching tool will often penetrate into the underlying layer of cardboard, resulting in a ragged, rough picture. In addition, many of the center dots of your cross-hatching will fall off, resulting in a texture which appears messy.

Nevertheless, these cheaper scratchboards are good to practice on. But, they are not suitable for fine art.

Black scratchboard is excellent for highly dramatic illustrations since it can exploit the theatrical aspect of light. Areas of strong contrast can also be easily enhanced by areas of solid black.

White scratchboard is also available in Claybord. An artist would paint black only in areas where needed. This leaves the white areas untouched and avoids the necessity of scraping off the black to expose the white. It also has a different finished effect compared to the black scratchboard. I prefer the black type because textured lines can be created by spoon-shaped scraping, which adds to the picture and gives it a hand-etched appearance similar to woodcuts. Also, if you use the white scratchboard and paint on the black ink, it is difficult to do it as smoothly as the manufacturer does, so when you go to scratch it, the black ink varies in thickness. Of course, if your subject is small, all you would have to paint is a little area, and there are advantages to that.

If you are new to scratchboard, I would suggest starting out with smaller-sized pictures, such as 5" x 7". Mark off the sizes desired on the back of the Essdee scratchboard and then cut with a

razor blade or X-Acto knife through the cardboard *back only*. With experience, you can then tackle the larger sizes: 12" x 18" (18" x 24" framed) . . . or even the full 18" x 24" sheet (24" x 30" framed).

You will save money in the long run if you stick with standard sizes [18" x 24", 24" x 30", or 9" x 12"] because of the availability of frames. Custom frames will cost a lot more money.

Scratchboard is available at most large art supply houses. It may also be ordered through artist material catalogues such as "Daniel Smith" out of Seattle, Washington [P. O. Box 84268, 98124-5568]. Many of the supply houses, including Daniel Smith, also have websites on the internet.

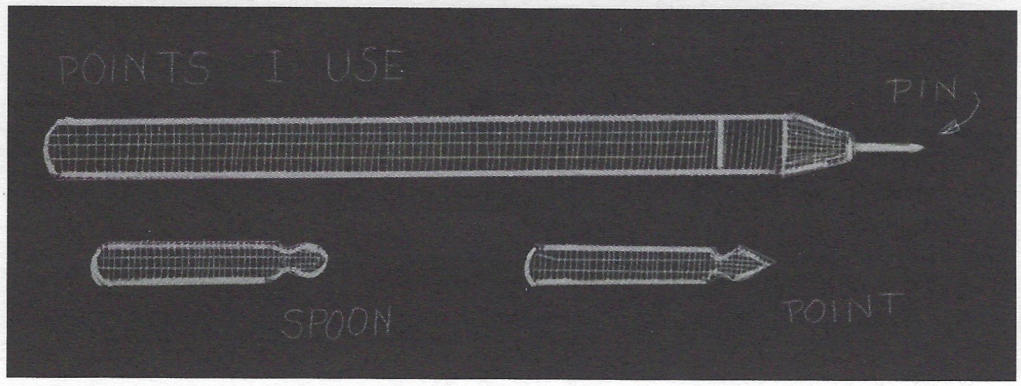
Depending on how you like to work (i.e., do you let the size of the material determine your drawing or do you draw first and then determine the size of the material), you will eventually need to cut the scratchboard to size. Simply measure on the back of the piece of scratchboard with a pencil and a ruler, drawing your lines to the proportions you desire. Then, take a cutting blade and put just enough pressure to go through the paper back. You do not have to cut through the chalky area. It will just break apart, and it is much easier to just cut the paper and not cut on the face of it through the chalk. It is similar to cutting drywall. I usually place a piece of mat board underneath so as not to mar my working surface.

If you are using any scratchboard other than Claybord, be sure to handle it with care as it can break if you bend it too sharply, or it can crack. The corners are also easily broken. And, try to keep it dry; it absorbs moisture from the air easily, and if it is stored in a damp atmosphere, you will need to thoroughly dry it out before you can use it. Moisture, even the humidity in the air, adversely affects the surface, causing it to cut badly. To dry it, you can lay the boards for a short time on a heating pad, lay it on a desk where it will get exposure to direct sunlight, or put it in a slightly warm oven for a few minutes . . . or even microwave it on a low/medium setting for a few seconds. Because the clay surface is hygroscopic and so susceptible to moisture, air conditioning or dehumidifiers in your work area can help eliminate the moisture in the air. Never use a board that is even slightly damp because you will not be able to cut crisp lines into the surface.

Tools

A sharp tool is all you need to create drawings by scratching through the surface to reveal white. There are a wide variety of engraving-type tools including dental tools, surgical scalpels, very sharp knives, razor blades, darts, and so forth. Each has different capabilities. Through experimentation, you will find which tools and which methods work best for you.

Some tools are specifically made for scratchboard cutting. These include the scratchknife or "sgraffito" knife, which is available with variously shaped cutting points. There are various sets of cutting knives also available at most art stores.

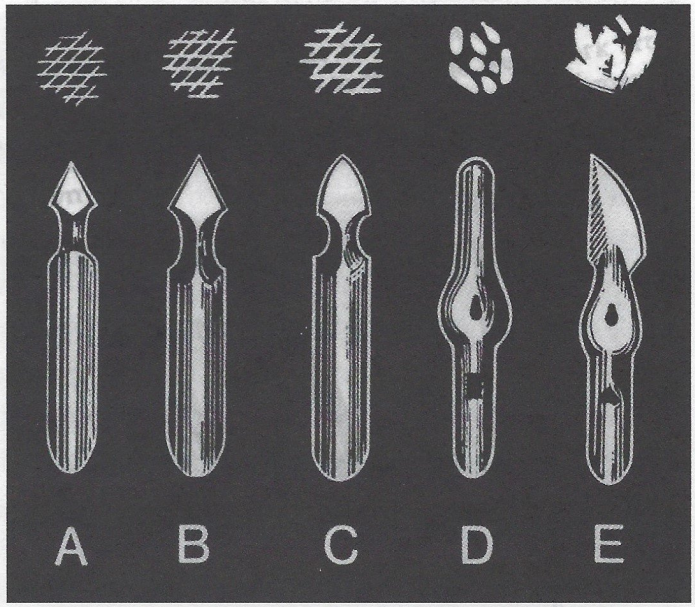


However, basically, there are two points you should have: a sharp-pointed stylus for line work and fine detail, and a spoon-shaped point for quickly removing the black surface from wide areas of a picture, such as for a bright sky. Most art

stores stock both types of tools.

In order to keep your points sharp, you can use a carborundum.

For scratching, I prefer a more simple needle type, which I originated. I use a common straight pin, like you might use in sewing, and put it in a holder. Any holder with a "chuck" will do, such as an X-Acto knife handle or a pin vise. I have found that a common straight pin is better than any tool. You never have to sharpen it, and it works perfectly from the start. When it gets dull, you replace it. And, using straight pins are very reasonable; you can get hundreds for just a few dollars. Besides, a straight pin is easier to handle than most tools. It also makes finer and more accurate lines and makes curves and circular motions more easily. I use my pin scriber and the spoon-type scriber exclusively.



Scrapercutters from "Scraperboard", Dryad leaflet 507 by Anthony Thacker (Dryad Press). These are some of the types of scratchboard tools supplied with craft kits.

Some artists have used sandpaper as a scraping tool to achieve some interesting effects. You can also use a wire brush or a fiber brush to create different effects.

There is a wide variety of tools which can totally or partially remove paint and ink on scratchboard, besides the scratching and scraping tools described above. Again, experimentation can lead to innovation and creativity because any tool which has the capacity to scratch, scrape, rub, or abrade can be used either as a drawing tool or to remove pigment.

Additional Materials

You will need good watercolor brushes in various sizes. There is a wide variety of brushes available, from fine sable or synthetic fiber to hog-bristle brushes. Experimentation will help you decide what works best for you.

You will also need a pencil. [See page 27 for more details.]

Paper towels are handy to have nearby when you are scratching. The surface of scratchboard can be soiled by a finger touching it. I have found that if I rest my hand on a soft paper towel while I am working, it helps avoid getting an oily fingerprint or smudge on the scratchboard surface.

White bond paper is also essential to create a preliminary drawing, which is a finished pencil sketch. Using a pencil, I draw the subjects and composition on the paper and add any shading that I will ultimately utilize in the completed scratchboard composition. For more details, see the section in this book on "Creating a Preliminary Drawing". Some people choose to transfer their drawings onto the scratchboard by using carbon paper or Saral transfer paper and chalk.

As for coloring the scratchboard work. I have found that transparent, fadeproof inks, such as Daler Rowney's FW Artist Acrylic inks or Dr. Martin's, work best. Carefully read the labels because some acrylic inks are opaque. The transparent inks are preferable since they are not visible on the black surfaces in case you accidentally wander out of a scratched area, and they will not mask the finely etched lines. Transparent inks are like dyes and will not hide your scratches.

To finish, I spray a gloss Krylon crystal clear acrylic coating, or preferably Pro Art Gloss Spray,

over the entire picture. This coating dries to an excellent gloss in just a few minutes. It also accentuates the colors, deepens the black, and reduces the visibility of any ink that might have strayed onto the black. It also gives some protection to the picture surface.

One last item . . . good lighting is essential! Eyestrain is a real possibility when working in fine detail. Personally, I use fluorescent lights overhead [I have eight 4-foot lights] which avoid hard shadows. I also have a round fluorescent lamp with a separate 4" magnifying glass attachment in the center which helps when extremely fine detail is required. Some artists choose to wear prescription glasses which have a slight magnification, or nearby you can have a separate magnifying glass to use.

If you do not have a lot of money to spend on scratchboard, or if you are just trying it out, buy one piece at a time. If you decide to get serious about it, you will be better off buying in quantities, especially when it comes to frames, glass, and mats. If you can purchase these items wholesale and frame your pictures yourself, you will save a good deal of money. But, the important thing is, to buy only what you need.

Additional Tools

For some endeavors, you may choose to rely on mechanical tools to achieve certain effects or for accuracy. They can achieve a tighter, more controlled look . . . but it is a different look than lines which have been hand-drawn or drawn freehand.

Among the tools that you may decide to use are straightedges, such as a ruler, T-square, triangle, or drafting table parallel bars (to help create parallel horizontal lines). Metal straightedges work best since plastic ones can get nicked by the sharp scratchboard tools and will not be reliable on future projects. Also helpful are French curves and arcs.

Draftsman templates for ovals, ellipses, and circles can be difficult to use with some of the scratchboard tools but can be helpful in rendering certain lines with more control. My pin scribe works easily with any template.

Of course, a traditional compass can be utilized to draw a perfect circle. You can use a compass by using a blade attachment or a sharply-pointed nib in place of a pen or pencil.

You can even use a toothbrush or stiff brushes (of any kind or size) such as abrasive brushes, wire filament brushes, and fiberglas filament brushes. A fiberglas brush is especially handy because of its small size. When brushing your scratched lines with a fiberglas brush, it softens the line and can be used to create a more delicate effect than steel wool. In addition, it can be used to gradually remove areas of black. You can also lightly cover some brushes with ink to create special stippling or splattering effects. Besides brushes, some artists have used sandpaper as a scraping tool to achieve some interesting effects. Others have used abrasive pads such as fine steel wool to achieve a certain look; if you want, you may purchase a specialized artist-grade, oil-free steel wool, but any fine steel wool will work. Steel wool can be used to remove large areas of color or to create soft tones.

You can also use sponges, cotton balls, or even paper towels to apply pigments. The key is to experiment and be creative.

Or, try making your own homemade tools like I do. I know of a scratchboard artist who uses a homemade tool consisting of a quarter-inch section of a metal hacksaw blade placed in an X-Acto blade holder to create crisp yet narrow bands of parallel lines; the end effect is similar to engraving.

And, consider talking to your dentist. Dental tools are made of fine steel, and the handles are practical and comfortable to hold. When dentists break tools or wear them down, they dispose of

them. With an oil stone and a little work — and a cooperating dentist, these dental instruments can be converted to interesting cutting tools for scratchboard.

In addition, there are a variety of drawing tools available that can be used to create images or remove pigments from clay surfaces. Graphite pencils and sticks of various grades can be used. If you are using Claybord, you can also use charcoal, pastel, or Conté sticks. Colored pencils that are water-soluble work extremely well on clay, leaving richly intense lines; wax-based colored pencils will work but leave lighter lines.

Many different ink-type pens can be used in conjunction with white clay surfaces. These include: quill nibs, Rapidograph and other technical drawing pens, felt-tip pens and markers, and ballpoint pens. These all dry quickly and do not have a tendency to smudge the surface. If using markers, however, watch for possible fading when exposed to sunlight. Furthermore, some markers cannot be easily scratched off. An artist can even use oil paints, if not applied too thickly.

As described later in this book, watercolor, tube acrylics diluted with water, and colored inks may be used to embed color in your black-and-white scratchboard.

Other possibilities for adding color to your surface include the use of airbrushes or atomizers, which can also affect the texture of the surface.

Some artists use acrylics, watercolor, and watercolor pencils to simply paint on the absorbent clay surface and use no scratching techniques at all! Artists like how the highly reflective clay surface reacts with the brushstrokes, allowing them to vary the tone and intensity of hues, use mixed-media combinations, manipulate edges, and use more color than with other watercolor papers, thus creating more brilliance. They also like how the pigment spreads with softened edges, and how its surface can support layers of impasto strokes or thin, transparent acrylic washes. Watercolor paints and inks are the best to use. If not waterproof, they will smudge and mess the image.

Some Last Thoughts

Your scratchboard drawing can be enhanced by color, which is explained later in this book. However, there are non-traditional approaches and multimedia techniques which can create different textures, gradations, and tones.

You can enhance a scratched drawing, making it multimedia, by adding black tape, press-on letters, photocopied images, printed screens and film (like those by Letraset or Prestype), and so forth.

Occasionally, as you are finishing a black-and-white scratchboard composition, you may find it simpler to add a few black lines with pen and waterproof India ink to a white area rather than attempting to cut them. This is especially true if you are working in a rather large white area, or if you need extremely fine and lacy black lines in a white area to create the effect you desire.

Some artists have even added collage-cut paper onto a scratchboard drawing.

Other textural effects on scratchboard can be achieved by using an airbrush or an atomizer. As mentioned earlier, a toothbrush can be used for splattering or granular textures. You can soak a sponge or fabric in ink and "print" them onto portions of your board. Or, rubber stamps can be used.

You can also add scratchboard panels to pen-and-ink drawings by preparing the panels separately and pasting them onto a traditional drawing. The scratchboard sections will add depth, texture, and volume to a drawing that would otherwise be one-dimensional and flat.

As you can see, the only limits to scratchboard are your imagination . . . and your willingness to try!

What Should I Do First?

You have gotten all the basic equipment and tools you need to get started. Next, it is best to try out your tools on a spare piece of scratchboard. You should familiarize yourself with the various techniques and effects that can be produced using your tools. And, try holding your tools in different ways . . . until you discover which you like best. As with all other media, through practice you will find ways to best express yourself and methods to achieve the effects you desire.

As you experiment, try straight and broken lines, freehand curves, wavy and erratic lines, cross-hatching, dots, dashes — varying in thickness and density. Doodle, play, and sketch using the tools. You will learn, with practice, where to apply each technique for its greatest effect. Draw with different pressures, both even and uneven, and look at the results. Remember that the best scratchboard drawings combine different kinds of lines and cross-hatching for purposes of texture.

If you have never held a cutting tool before, try holding the tool like you would hold a pen or pencil. Cutting is similar to drawing, except you use more pressure when necessary. Generally, however, the best controlled cuts are done by cutting toward you, and perhaps turning the drawing from time to time. As described later, short strokes, using the fingers, and keeping your hand in one position, give the best control.

Try to learn enough basic skills that allow you to express your point of view. Keep in mind that the possibilities of scratchboard are virtually infinite. Use a variety of materials and tools. Learn from studying other artists' methods and works.

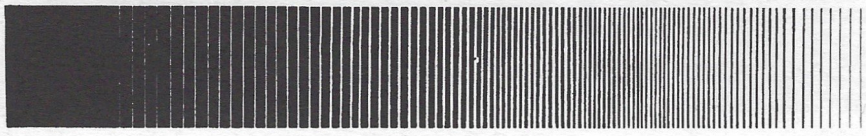
And, explore. Scratchboard is a fascinating and exciting medium which is continuing to evolve.

Tone Values

When working in black and white, tone values range in scale, with black as the darkest value and white having the lightest. Between these two extremes lie many shades [or values] of gray. These values depend on how much white is scratched from the black or how much black is added to the white. In other words, by varying the amount of white and black, you can obtain the illusion of any tone of gray you desire.

Besides using lines, you may also use dots, irregular lines, and other patterns to create the varying, subtle values of black, white, and gray.

Scale of Values



Black 75% Gray 50% Gray 25% Gray White

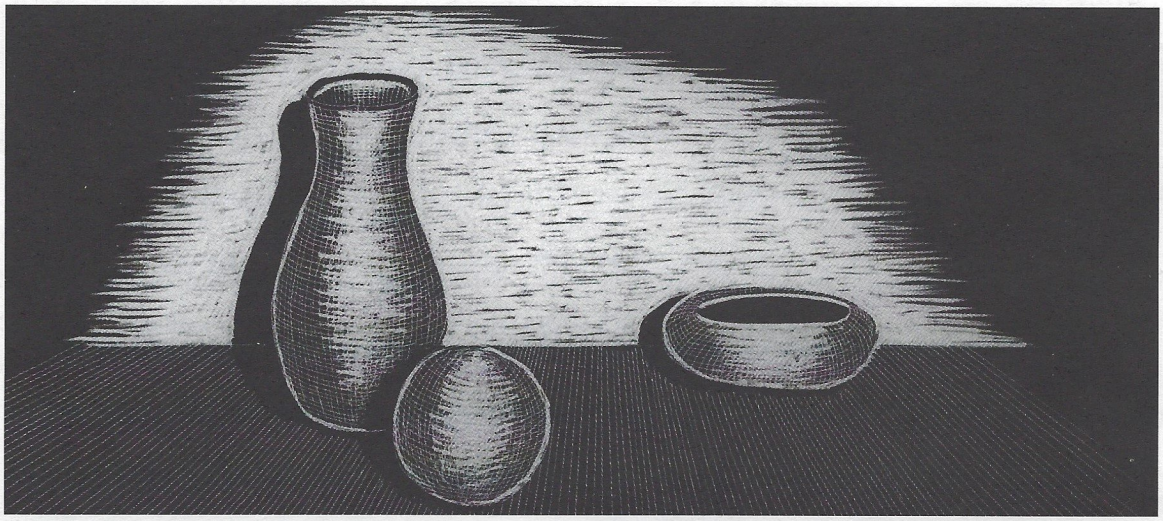
Adapted from figure 40 in Merritt Cutler's how to cut drawings on Scratchboard.

A Few More Thoughts About Light, Lines, and Composition

One of the challenges of scratching is the fact that as an artist, you are trying to capture three-dimensional objects on a flat surface which is black and white. As in any medium, the effect of light will play a very crucial role in the artist's ability to interpret the true form of the subject, but it is even moreso if one hopes for a successful rendering in scratchboard. The medium itself forces the artist to deal with the contrast between light and shadow, and the profound drama and intensity which can be created by their use.

The fact is, images are revealed to us through light. The direction from which light emanates is thus very important. Light can emanate from the back, side, or front of the subject. Whether realistically depicted or slightly exaggerated, the impression it leaves will add or detract from your study. The placement of light is critical and can focus a viewer's attention on specific areas or details of your composition. Light helps to establish a subject's form, texture, and pattern.

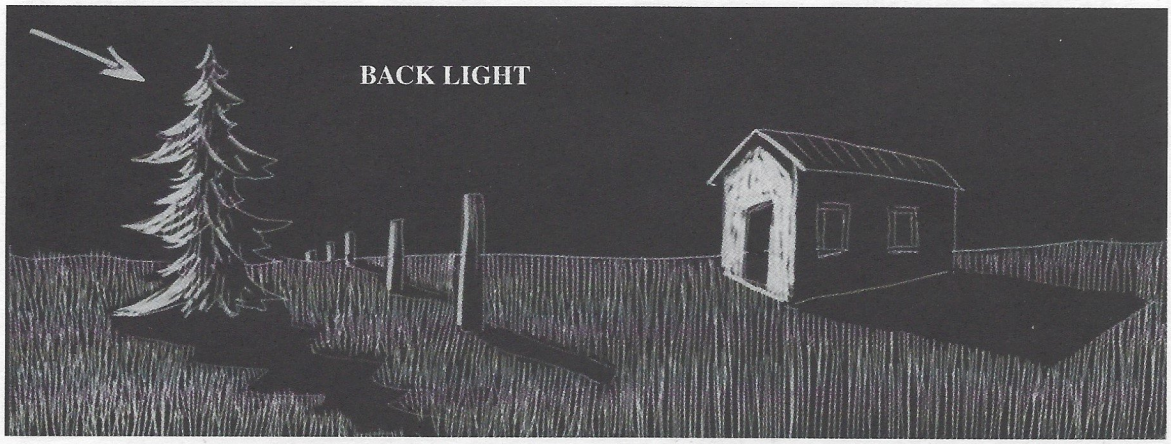
Front Lighting

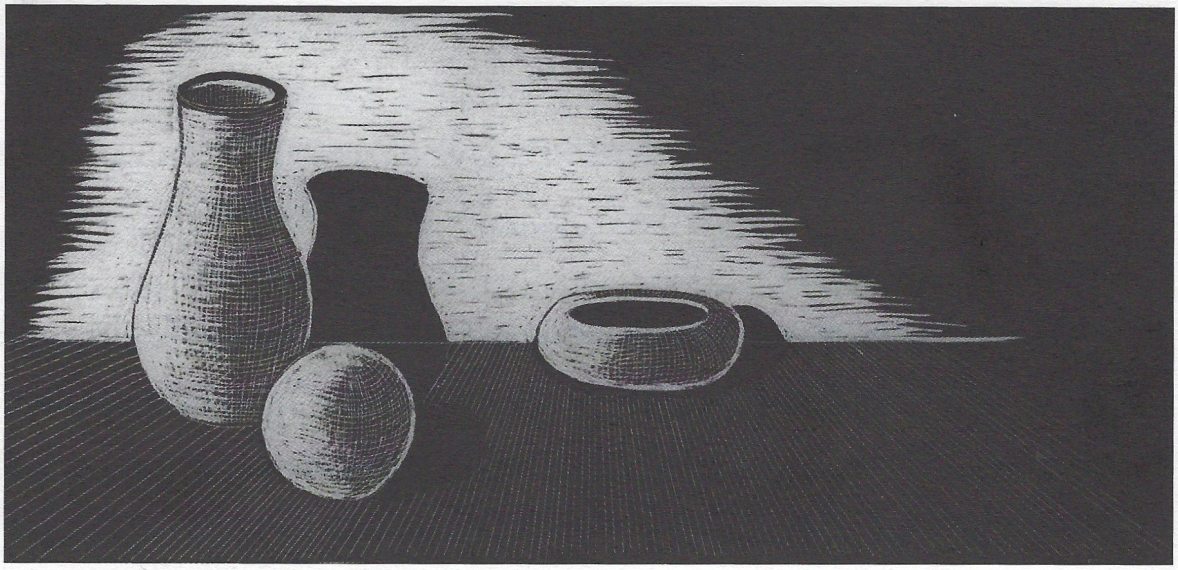


Scratchboard, of course, lends itself naturally to contrast. Strong, bold forms, open spaces, and intentional lines. Solid blacks hint of strength, intense power, deep shadows, or vast depths. Large, plain white areas give an openness to the illustration as well as light.

As for lines. Freehand line technique is like calligraphy in the sense that there are as many and varied possibilities as there are in handwriting, i.e., lines and marks created in scratchboard are versatile. Using this rich variety of marks, an artist can even create an illusion of color in a black-and-white picture. The direction of your scratched lines can help to indicate dimensionality or volume.

Back Lighting





Side Lighting

Short lines exude a sense of activity or motion.

With experience, you will find that some lines work better than others to create a pattern, texture, or value. The shapes, volumes, and tones in your illustration will be defined by the widths and directions of its lines.

You will also learn with practice that the proximity (or density), width, and intervals of lines affect the tone. The more cross-hatching, the lighter the value.

Scratchboard does lend itself to interesting effects, and effects are extremely important. Especially if you are working in black and white and do not plan to color your work, texture and pattern can add excitement and interest. Use different tools . . . even your fingernail will produce certain effects you might want to utilize. You can also use various brushes, pens, sticks of wood, and so forth. White may be cut over black, black added over white, and either cut again.

A grasp of composition — the basic structure and arrangement of shapes and lines which are used to convey a feeling of the subject — and good craftsmanship are equally important to the creation of a successful rendering.

Denmark's oldest schooner, Isefjord

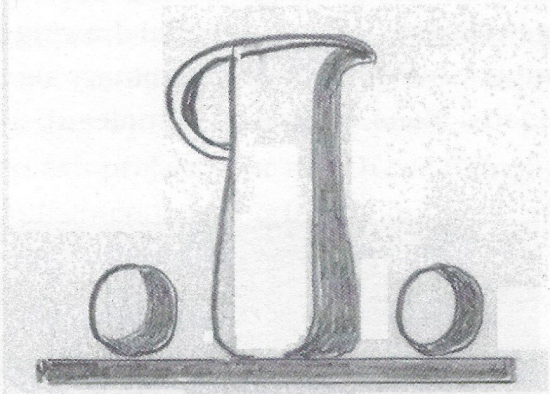
Creating a Preliminary Drawing

The first step in creating any work of art is to decide on your subject.

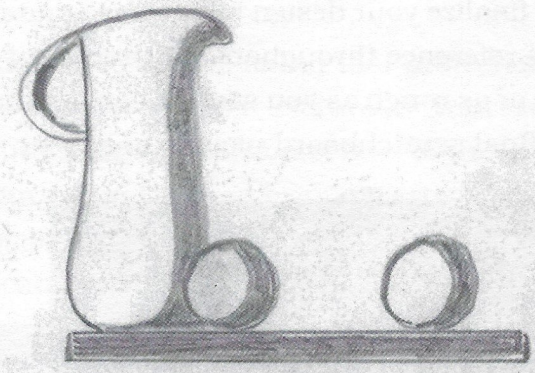
After you have decided on your subject, the first step in the process of creating a scratchboard piece is to make a small sketch of your subject to develop the composition. This working drawing need not be accurate or detailed, nor does it need to be copied exactly. The gradations of shading do not need to be addressed at this time. However, you should have a fairly clear picture in your mind of the effect(s) you would like to impart, and have the elements of lighting and composition worked out.

Feel free to move objects around until a pleasing effect is attained and the composition incorporates fine art precepts.

I have heard some artists say to me when explaining their picture, "That's the way it was". Let's change "the way it was" into something better — better composition, desirable simplification, change of colors, the addition of some people or animals. Move a tree, cut some trees out, add an element which was not really there . . . anything to make a more interesting and beautiful picture. Use smaller figures next to larger ones, such as a person next to a tree, to show scale and size.



Center position – wrong



Center of interest is correctly drawn

Composing a center of interest. In terms of the composition of a picture, remember that the center is not necessarily the best place for the subject. Do not center or equalize objects as shown in the left sketch. A point of interest must be kept, but keeping it not "balanced" is best! Place the center of interest off-center as in the right sketch. Lighten the off-center so the eye is drawn to it.

I think all pictures should be beautiful and show nature at its best. Take pride at the marvels of the power that we artists have to make nature look even better than it is! That is the power we artists have.

Of course, as an artist, you may wish to bring the observer's eye to a certain place in your picture. Do not make the beginner's mistake of drawing the focal point in the dead center of your picture. If you're going to show a vase or draw a tree, do not put either in the middle of your picture; keep your main subject off-center or to the side. The center of interest should always be in an off-center point, even in a corner. You can then incorporate lines of varying directions — vertical, horizontal, and/or diagonal — to help make the picture more balanced and pleasing to the eye. You can also guide the eye to a center of interest by using the greatest detail at the focus of interest and lightening it more than the balance of the picture, pulling the eye to this point. Use less detail in other parts of

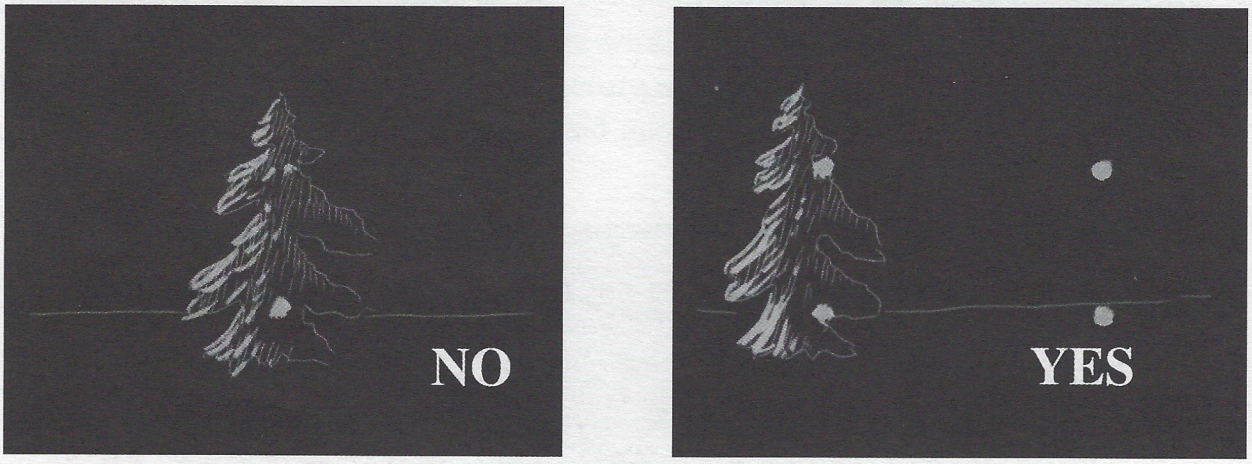
Creating a center of interest in the Preliminary Drawing. Note the light in the center of the painting which forces the eye to the center of interest. The center is also where the most detail in the picture can be found.

the picture.

This preliminary study is also the time when major decisions are made, as well as desired alterations. However, if your ideas do not come across as effectively as you originally visualized them, discard your sketch and start again. Try approaching the subject in a different way. This is the best time to make your changes because once you have actually started scratching, it becomes difficult — but not impossible — to make changes.

This preliminary drawing can be created with an ordinary black pencil as described below. If you use a lead-type pencil, be aware that there will be a distracting shine to your lines. You might also find it helpful, especially if you are a beginner, to work with a white pastel-type pencil on black paper. This will give you a better idea of the finished effect.

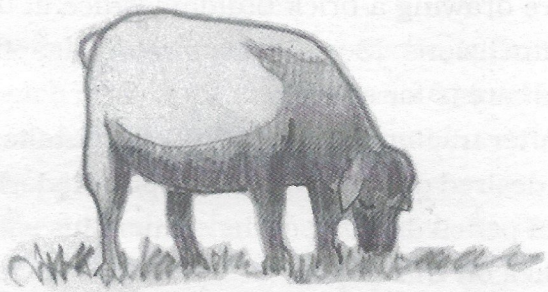
Especially if you are a beginner, it is best to work from an existing drawing. It is important to clarify and finalize your design before any scratching is started. Having an initial drawing provides a continuous reference throughout the process of creating your work. Your preliminary sketch can be as finished or as rough as you wish. It can also have instructions, reminders, or notes about how you wish your final scratchboard picture to appear.



Left: One might naturally assume to put the center of interest in the center of the drawing, and many beginners make this mistake. Right: The correct way to create the point of interest. Have the focal point of interest be off-center. The white dots show possible points of interest.

After years of sketching and painting, I can now draw anything put before me, whether landscape, still life, or a photograph. I would advise all students to practice sketching until any subject can be adequately drawn.

I am often asked how I capture the complexity of a photographed image in my drawings, and consequently, in my scratchboard work. The proposed subject can be drawn on paper by "eyeballing" it — you draw by trial and error until your drawing is satisfactory. But, I have also found and used several aids which not only help to get a picture onto paper and essentially speed up the entire process, but also assist with its composition. These are described on the next page.



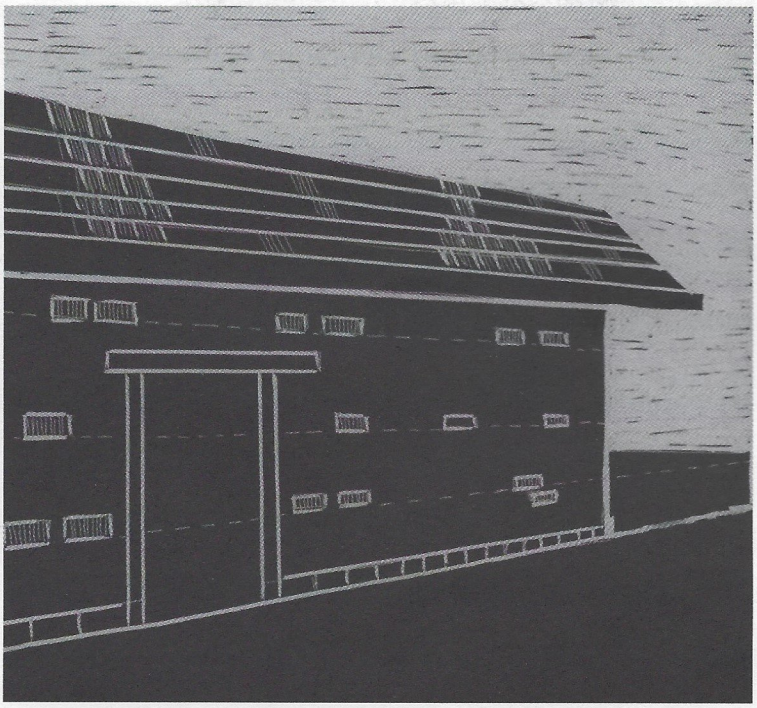
Light and Shadow Areas. Outline areas of dark and light. Do not put in detail with your initial projection. Use it just as a guideline. Outline only the most important lines — the areas of light and dark — which will serve as guidelines to refine and add details in your final scratchboard. See page 41 for the finished, detailed scratchboard of the tree.

In my travels, I have taken thousands of pictures, and thus I possess thousands of slides. Some scratchboards are painted exactly as I photographed them. For others, I utilize varying parts from other slides, such as a tree from one, a shack from another. In short, do not let a photograph you are using limit you artistically. Use a photograph for information, reference, and inspiration, but do allow the unique characteristics of scratchboard — the dramatic contrast of light and shadow and the capturing of minute detail — to come through.

If my source photo or slide is detailed and complicated, I have found that projection is a great aid in speeding up the sketching process and copying the original picture or your small pencil sketch. You can project your sketch or original picture — or any portion of it — to the final size you desire. This technique is now taught in college art courses and is used by many artists where realism is desired. One such famous artist who utilized projection was Norman Rockwell.

You can project an image in several ways: you can use a camera lucida, an opaque projector, or a slide-type projector. I utilize a postcard projector with a built-in light to project any printed picture or a 35 mm. slide projector; it is quite simple to sketch from the projected image. If the slide is very complex, I project it onto the paper to trace the main parts I desire onto the paper.

After it is focused, a projected image provides many advantages — it allows perfect composition by allowing easy enlargement or diminishing and the shifting of the image up, down, sideways, forward, and/or backward. Pencil tracing the image is then much faster than "eyeballing" it. Nevertheless, since it is virtually impossible to trace every minute detail of a photo, only trace the most important lines and positions of objects. For example, when tracing trees with countless leaves, only outline the darkest and shaded areas of the tree. Or, if



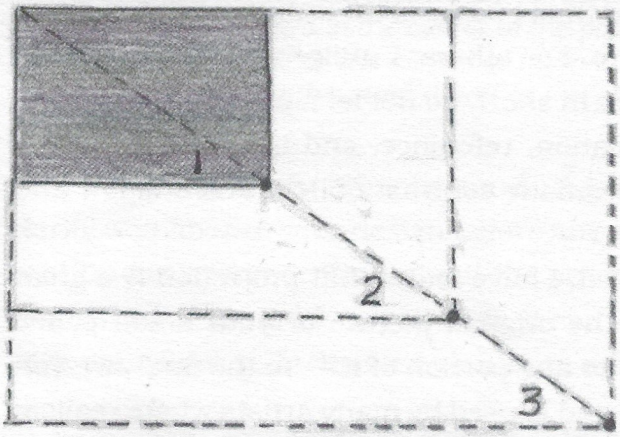
When copying a picture of a building by projection, copy only a few details at spaced locations to show sizes. The remaining details can be filled in later.

you are drawing a brick building, trace in only a few bricks in different areas so that you have the size dimensions. [See illustration on page 25.] For animals, outline the shape and trace around the darkest areas for shadows.

After tracing sufficient guidelines, take the outline to your drawing table to refine and add most of the desired details. With a soft pencil, darken areas as required until you have a truly finished and shaded pencil drawing of the scene. This will serve as your "blueprint", so make and correct all your mistakes on this paper.

In the past when I have used a slide, I have found that for putting in the final details, I like to use a Reflecta MB 300, a table-top slide viewer which enlarges to a 4" x 6" screen. But, for the finest extreme details, I find it necessary to view a slide directly against a bright light using a three- to four-power hand-held magnifying glass. You can see detail with this that you cannot really see in any other way.

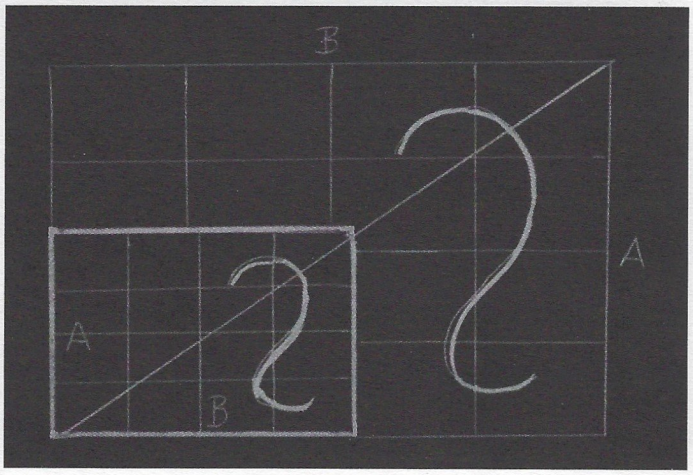
The "eyeballing" method — using no aids — allows the artist to determine where objects belong on the paper by observing the approximate position of various items and making marks to indicate their positions. Thus, when finalizing the sketch, the artist can look at the negative space around an object as well as at the object itself, which will assure proper proportioning and positioning of the subject.



You can use this technique to enlarge a picture to the same proportions. This works very well when proportionately enlarging a still life.

Another method I use is to have a copy center make a 9" x 12" color enlargement of a slide. Such color enlargements cost only a few dollars. This allows me to have a constant view of the subject, complete with all the details and colors.

If you have difficulty drawing the picture this way, use what I call the "squaring method". You can draw a reference grid to divide the photo into smaller boxes, and divide your paper into proportionate boxes drawn to a scale. You can make the scale to whatever proportions with which you are comfortable. It is then quite easy to enlarge your small sketch perfectly by looking at one "box" at a time on the small sketch and drawing that portion of the picture into the corresponding larger box on the fuller-size sheet of paper. You can thus enlarge the picture to any size while maintaining its original dimensions. Just be sure the proportions of height and width are the same on the small sketch or photo as on the full-size piece of paper.



Enlarging a picture by using diagonals through the corners and then squaring same. Draw a diagonal line through the center of your picture to each corner and extend this line. You can select any point on that diagonal line to run horizontal and vertical lines to create any picture size desired.

If you do not want to mark lines on your photograph, tape a transparent cover over it and mark your grid lines on it. I have used clear plastic wrap, such as Saran wrap, or Mylar, with good results. Just be sure to tape the ends of the wrap

on the back of the photo. Then you can use a felt-tip pen to draw your lines.

To make a grid, first draw two lines through the middle: one horizontal, one vertical. Then draw both horizontal and vertical lines through the middle of each of the four squares created in step one. At this point, you should have 16 small units, all proportional. Next, draw a diagonal line from one corner to the opposing corner, extending it for a distance on each end.

Now, rule a larger size piece of paper so it also has the same number of areas. If we continue to use the example above, you would now have 16 large areas.

Subsequently, you can simply enlarge from any square on the photo to its corresponding larger square. You need only transfer the details from the smaller unit into its corresponding larger one.

If I am drawing a still life, I set it up on a table and draw directly what I see. Sometimes, I also do this when I am drawing a landscape.

Take a 4" x 6" piece of cardboard and cut out an area in the middle of the same proportions of the picture you are going to make. Use this to create a mask to view the still-life objects and arrange them so they fit properly within the viewing area of the mask. Using paper of the same dimensions as the cut out, you can readily see where to place objects for the best arrangement and composition. Seeing what you are going to draw through this window allows you to see what objects seem to come toward you and which seem to go away from you. Feel free to move the objects to the right or left. Place objects off-center. You can also use this like a telephoto lens and step further away as if you are looking at a distant object. And, with still lifes, there are no borders, so making this mask helps the artist visualize where to put the vase on the canvas so you will have room for everything you want in your picture and be able to place objects for the best arrangement and composition.

Remember . . . in real life we see everything; but, as artists, we need to cut out a lot in our pictures. In a picture, we can only see what is in that one little window. Good composition is critical. It is crucial to be able to visualize the entire picture — its top, bottom, right, and left portions.

There is a similar aid which can be used for composing and drawing a still life or outdoor landscape. Before I draw, I make a thread grid. To make a thread grid, use a piece of mat board (about 5" x 7"), cutting out a center portion in the proportions of your final picture. Then, punch or poke holes (at a distance symmetrically apart of your choosing) along the edge of this cut-out window and string thread both horizontally and vertically as previously described. This creates guidelines. You can now view your proposed still life or outdoor landscape through this "window", and using lines on your paper (like the grid described above), you can determine where each part of the picture belongs. By moving the window closer or further from your eyes, you can see exactly what will be put on your paper. You can also move it up, down, or sideways until the view appears to be the most pleasing. This is a great help in composing, especially for beginners.

A few last thoughts. When you tape the corners of your paper, be sure to use a good quality adhesive or masking tape. Regular Scotch tape tears the paper too much.

Also, when I am making my sketches, I like to use a soft graphite pencil. Some artists prefer a medium-grade pencil, a 2B, or a 2H, but an F or B works best. They are almost like using ink and give a good line. You can use an H ["hard"], but it could possibly scratch.

If you are planning to use white scratchboard, most of what I explained above works except for the fact that your working drawing will need all the areas of light and dark very clearly indicated.

Be sure to plan your drawings carefully. Before you transfer your drawing, try to clearly and precisely work out the perspective, areas of light and shadow, and fine details.

Picture Size and Preparing Essdee & Claybord Scratchboard

Because Essdee scratchboard is fragile and can be damaged or broken quite easily, never handle it any more than is absolutely necessary.

For your design, you may need to cut the board to a proper size. Always use a sharp knife and a sturdy metal ruler to guide the knife. Scissors can be used, but the board may crack. Although I do not do this, some artists choose to mount the cut scratchboard piece on a heavier piece of cardboard or mounting board to give it more stability.

If you choose to do this, use a smooth piece of cardboard which has never been bent. You will need to glue the two pieces together. Use a thin, even coating of rubber cement or some similar bonding agent, following the instructions on the container. If you use an aerosol bonding adhesive spray, like the type used to mount photographs, take care to protect the things in the immediate area. Since scratchboard marks easily, a clean sheet of paper should be used when pressing the scratchboard firmly to the mounting board.

Essdee scratchboard comes in 20" x 24" pieces. To fit an 18" x 24" standard frame, cut the scratchboard to 12" x 18", which leaves a 3" mat around the picture.

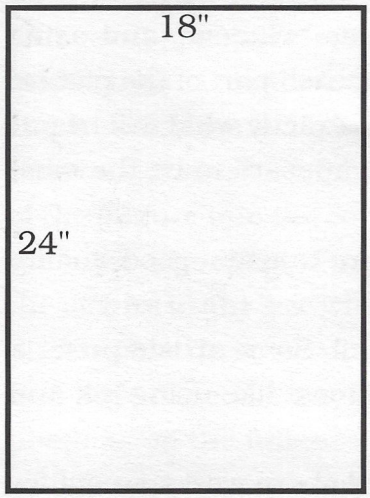
To fit a standard 24" x 30" frame, cut the scratchboard to 18" x 24", which also provides for a 3" mat border.

To fit a 9" x 12" standard frame, cut the scratchboard to 7" x 10", allowing for a 1" mat border.

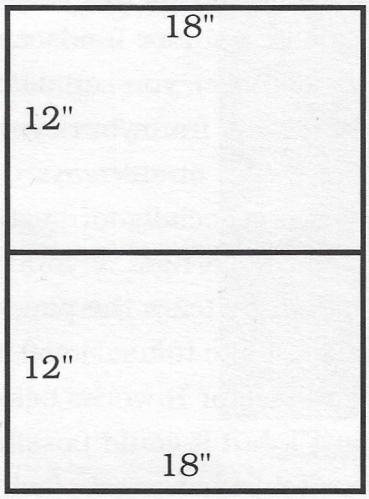
When cutting scratchboard, thin boards can be cut with scissors. But, for thicker boards, you can use a utility knife as described earlier in the text. You can use a metal straightedge or T-square to control the cut. But, please be careful and watch your fingers!

How to measure and cut scratchboard to the size you desire

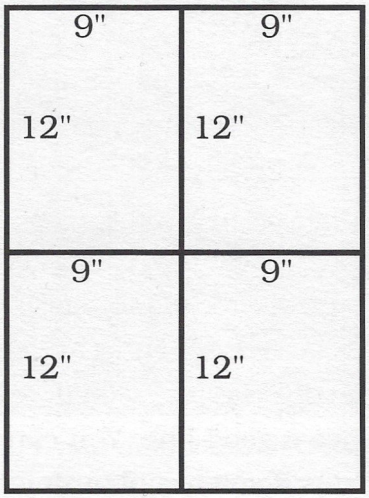
I. How to cut **Claybord** to fit standard frame sizes: 18" x 24", 12" x 18", 9" x 12"



18" x 24"



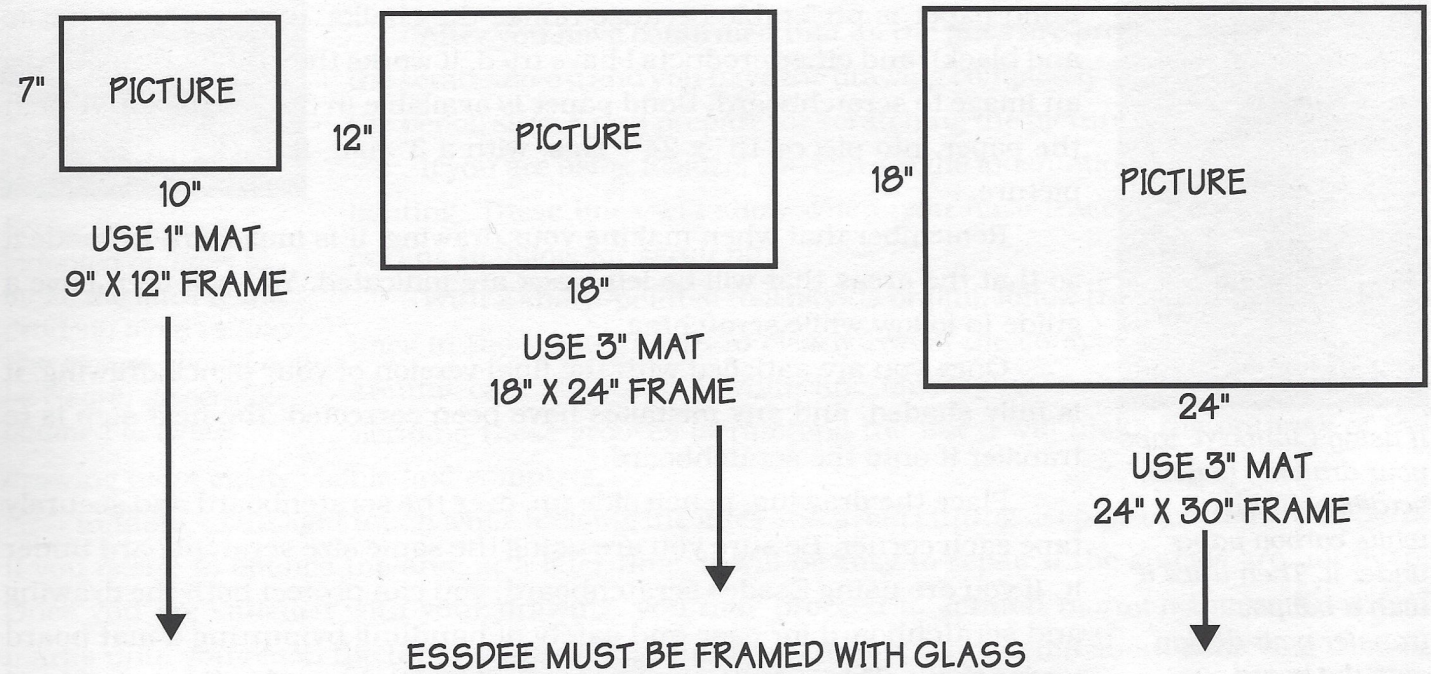
12" x 28"
yields two pieces
from the standard
18" x 24" size

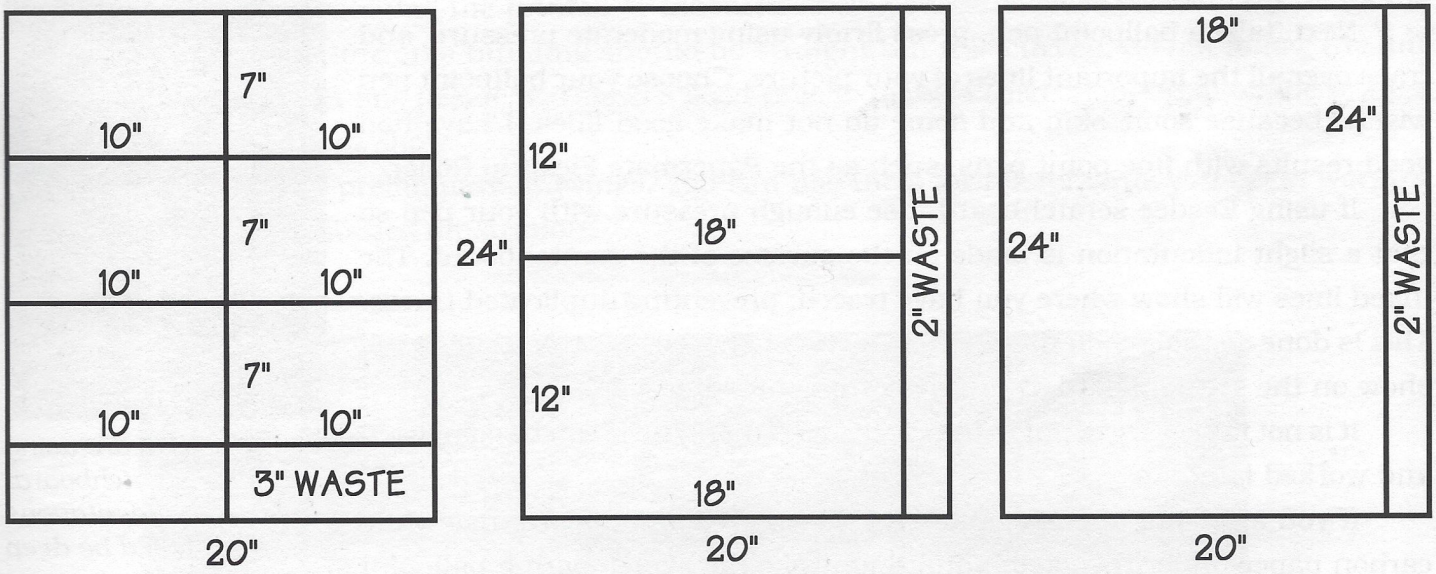


9" x 12"
yields four pieces
from the standard
18" x 24" size

II. How to cut **Essdee-type** scratchboard to fit standard frame sizes, allowing for mats and glass. Essdee must be framed with glass to protect its cardboard base.

Essdee scratchboard comes in 20" x 24" pieces. To fit standard size frames with a mat:
7" x 10" fits a 9" x 12" frame 12" x 18" fits a 18" x 24" frame
18" x 24" fits a 24" x 30" frame





HOW TO CUT ESSDEE 20" x 24" SCRATCHBOARD

Finishing the Pencil Drawing and Transferring it to the Scratchboard

If using Claybord, tape your drawing to your scratchboard with white carbon paper under it. Then trace it with a ballpoint pen to transfer your design onto the board.

Your preliminary pencil drawing should be done preferably on bond paper, but fairly thin paper, such as tissue (tracing paper), can be used. Bond paper is preferable because unlike the chalks, carbon papers (white and black), and other products I have tried, it works the best for transferring an image to scratchboard. Bond paper is available in 36" rolls. I usually cut the paper into pieces 18" x 24". This, with a 3" mat, frames to a 24" x 30" picture.

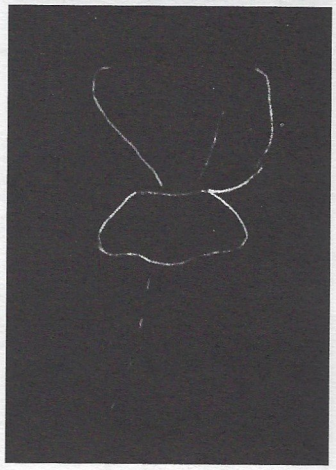
Remember that when making your drawing, it is important to shade it so that the areas that will be left black are indicated. You will then have a guide to follow while scratching.

Once you are satisfied with the final version of your pencil drawing, it is fully shaded, and any mistakes have been corrected, the next step is to transfer it onto the scratchboard.

Place the drawing, pencil side up, over the scratchboard and securely tape each corner. Be sure you are using the same size scratchboard under it. If you are using Essdee scratchboard, you can protect both the drawing and scratchboard for ease and safety of handling by putting a mat board under them. This can be important since scratchboard will break if bent too far.

Next, take a ballpoint pen, press firmly using moderate pressure, and trace over all the important lines of your picture. Choose your ballpoint pen wisely, because some skip and some do not make good lines. I have had good results with fine point pens, such as the Papermate Flexgrip Roller.

If using Essdee scratchboard, use enough pressure with your pen so that a slight indentation is made on the surface of the scratchboard. The inked lines will show where you have traced, preventing duplicated traces. This is done so that when the pencil sketch is removed, the traced lines will show on the scratchboard as grooves or indented lines.



If you are using Essdee scratchboard, the indentations should be deep enough to be seen with good lighting.

It is not necessary to put in the excessive details. These can be completed and worked later.

If you are using the Masonite-type Claybord scratchboard, use white carbon paper under the sketch and then trace the sketch with a ballpoint pen. This will leave a transferred white image onto the board.

If you are using white scratchboard, use a piece of black carbon paper under your working drawing. Be sure it is face down, so the traced lines go onto your scratchboard and not onto the back of your preliminary sketch.

This tracing process can seem tedious, but it offers you the opportunity to reassess your design. You can carefully lift the paper from time to time to make sure that your lines are clear. Also, since you are tracing only the basic outlines, aspects of your composition can be more clearly observed.

Scribe the traced, indented outlines to make the lines of the drawing more visible. The picture should now be clearly discernible, outlined in white.

You may decide that an object can be placed in a more effective location in the painting.

When finished tracing, remove the tape from the two lower corners, lift the pencil drawing up with the two taped upper corners acting as hinges, and look at the picture to see if all lines have been traced. If not, lower the pencil drawing, re-tape the corners, and complete the tracing of the missed lines.

After you have confirmed that all the lines are present on the surface of the scratchboard and you have the drawing completely traced, you can remove the pencil sketch and prepare for scratching the picture on the scratchboard.

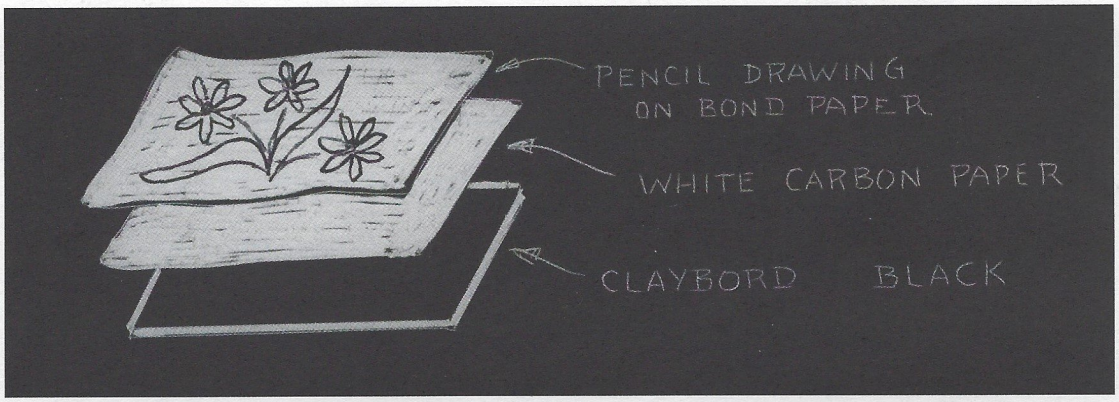
If you are using Essdee, you can see the indentations with good overhead lighting. These lines will show where you have traced and provide a good outline to follow for scratching.

With a sharp-pointed tool (stylus or pin), follow the printed (or indented) lines in the scratchboard to clearly reveal the composition. Do not scratch around cast shadows; a white line enveloping a shadow is not realistic. Scribing these grooves (scratching the lines) will make the outlines of the drawing more easily visible and complete.

Initially, use a light touch while incising the lines and avoid cutting deep gouges in the Claybord. If you desire to change the area at a later time, it will be easy to repair if the gouges are not deep. Once you are satisfied with your drawing, you may proceed to scratch more and more lines and marks until you reach the tonal value or brightness you desire. More detail about achieving desired effects and finishing your composition can be found in the section entitled "Shading the Picture".

While you are scratching the printed or indented lines, you can always correct and refine the line. For example, if a line on a building should be straight but it is curved, do not follow the line . . . make a new correct line beside it. This is a good time to make a correction, because the printed or indented lines will not show.

Always save your preliminary drawings. You can use them for reference as you begin working on your actual scratchboard illustration.



Tracing drawing onto scratchboard with white carbon paper.
Lines can be refined and corrected by drawing a new line beside the line you do not like.

Preliminary Pencil Drawing in Contrast to the Finished Scratchboard Art

Your preliminary pencil drawing will not have all the detail of your finished scratchboard. It can be as rough or as finished as you wish. On the following pages are some preliminary pencil drawings followed by the finished scratchboard illustration.

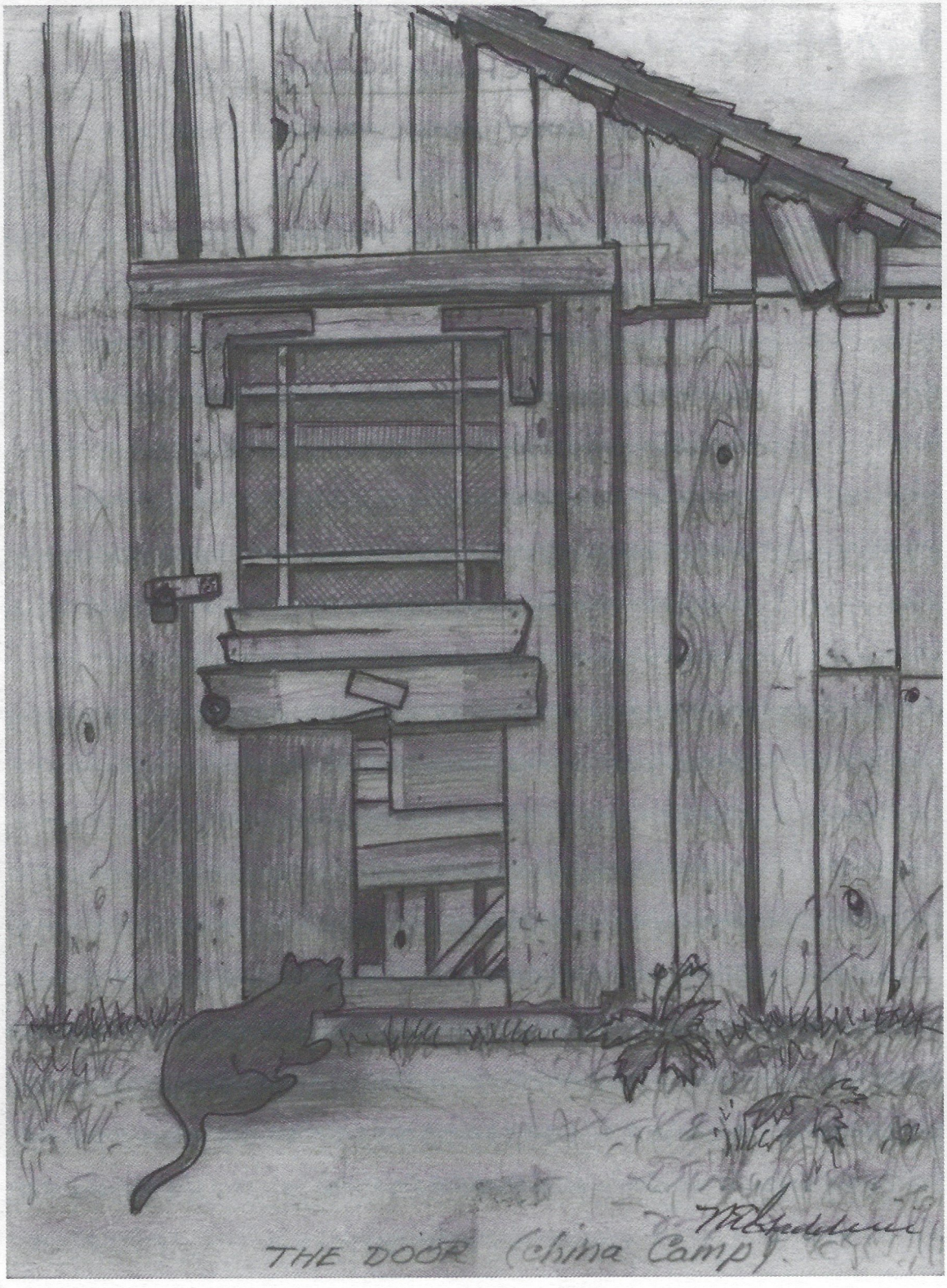
Cabin at China Camp

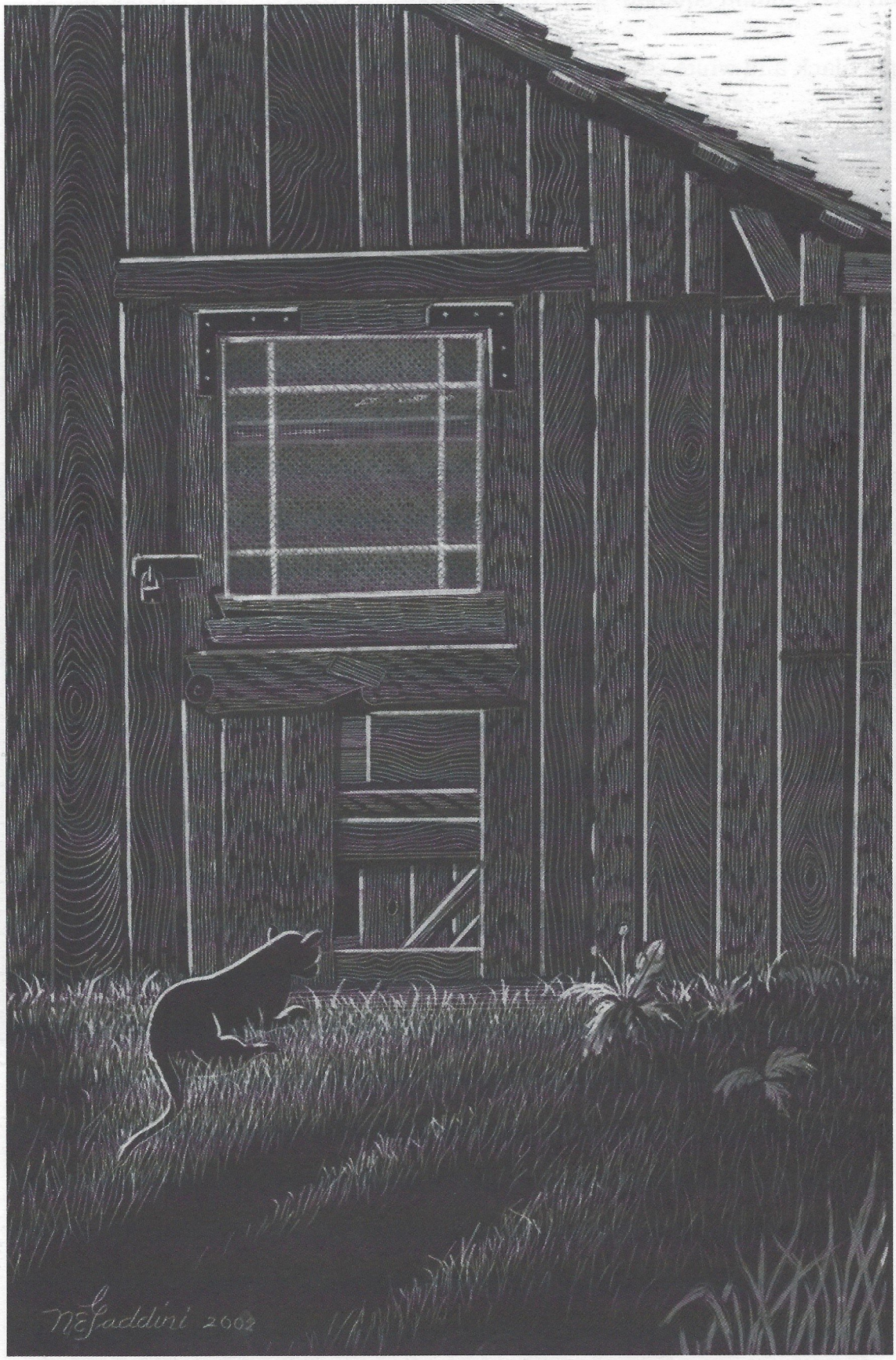
This preliminary drawing is an excellent example of woodgrain and grass.

Note the light from the left on all the vertical boards, and the shadows on the right side of each board.

Use black ink for nails and shadows as needed.

Use diluted black ink (gray) for dulling the window and the grass in the lower right corner.

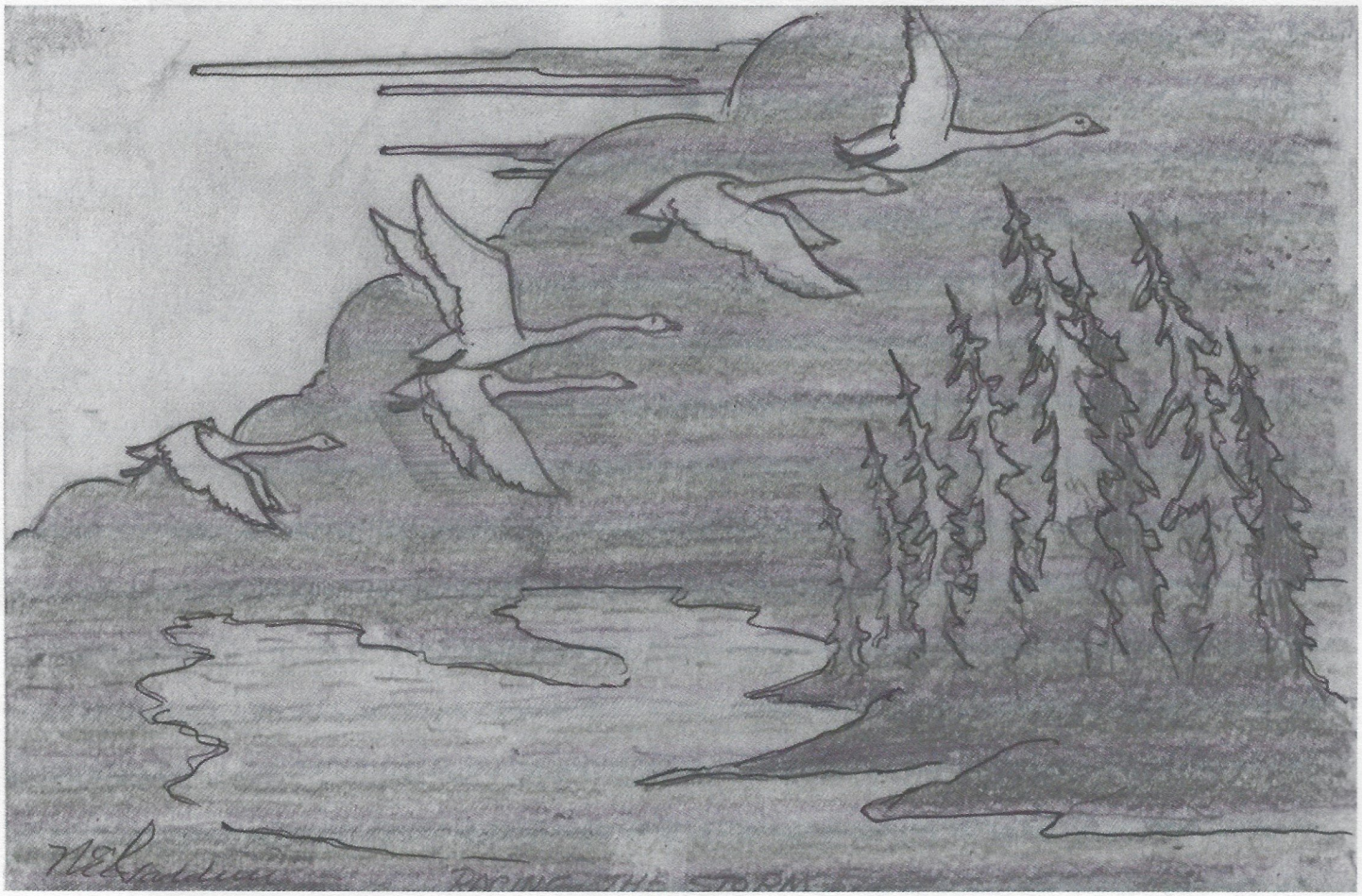



N. Saddiri 2002

Racing the Storm

This preliminary drawing is a good example of
how light on trees should emanate from the left side.

It is a simple black and white composition.



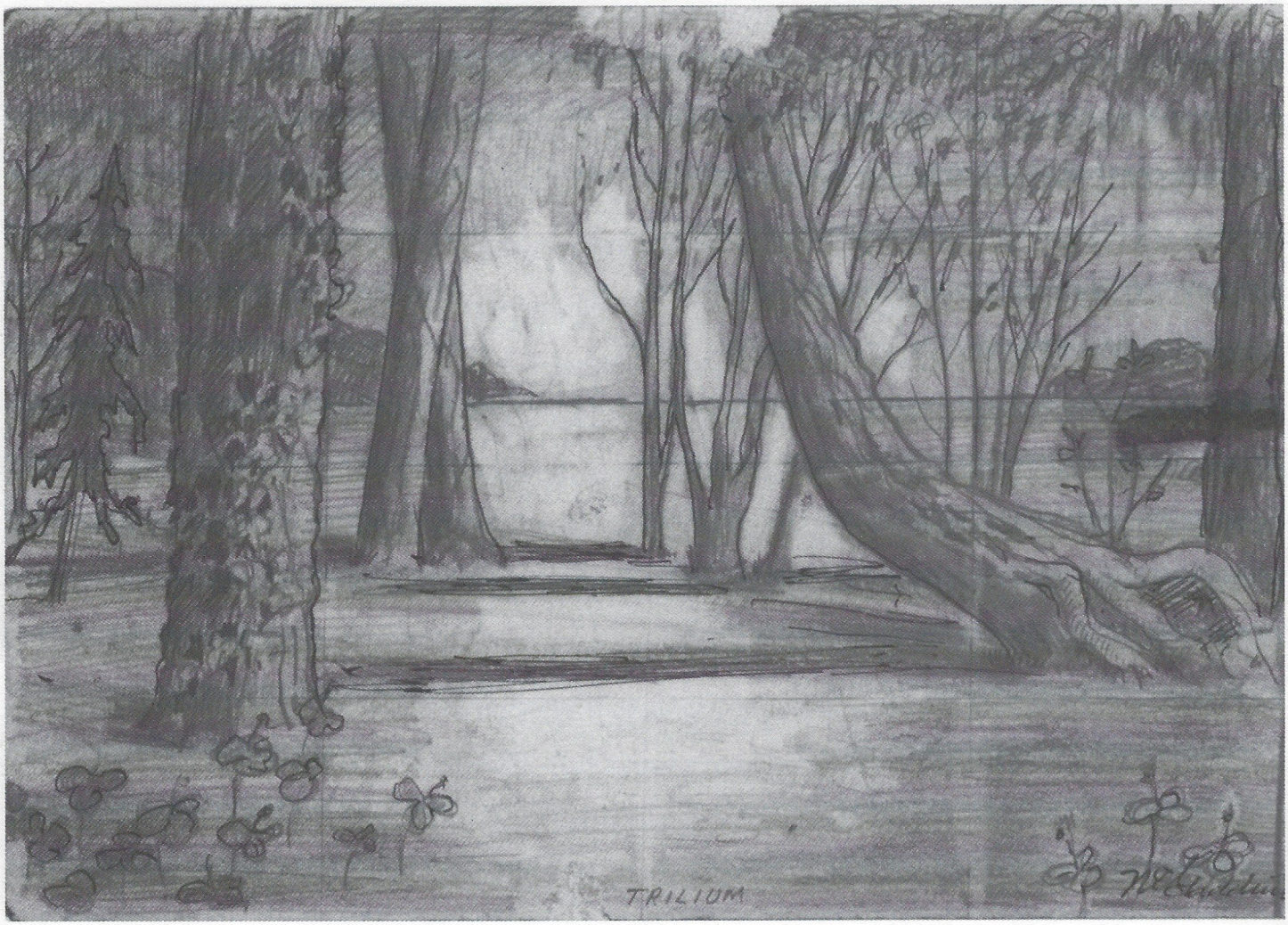
If you look at the trees in the finished drawing, you can clearly see how the light is coming from the left.

The white birds contrast against the black sky.
This is an important element of scratchboard — contrasting light with dark.

Triliums

This preliminary drawing is a great example of
a landscape with light emanating from the right side.

Note how the grass is lighter in the center.



After finishing the scratching, the ivy was too prominent in white, so I painted it with waterproof black ink diluted with water to gray it.

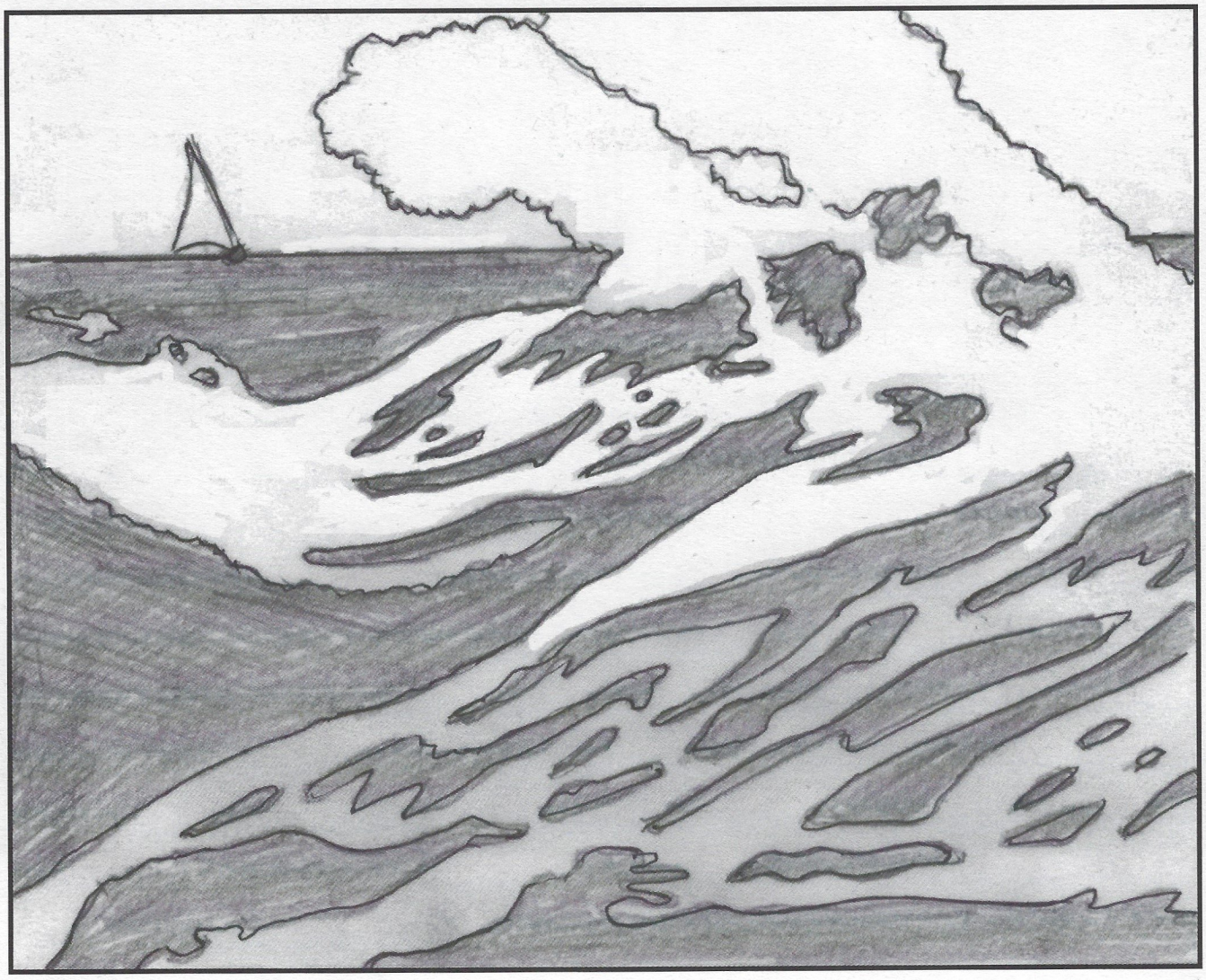
I also chose to paint the clouds in the sky and the grass on the left and right sides so as to intensify the lightness in the center of the picture.

Note how the grass is more prominent and detailed in the foreground. It becomes lighter and less detailed in the background.

Ocean Scene with White Caps and Breakers

Always remember to draw your picture with a soft pencil so that when you trace it on the scratchboard with ink you can tell what parts you have traced.

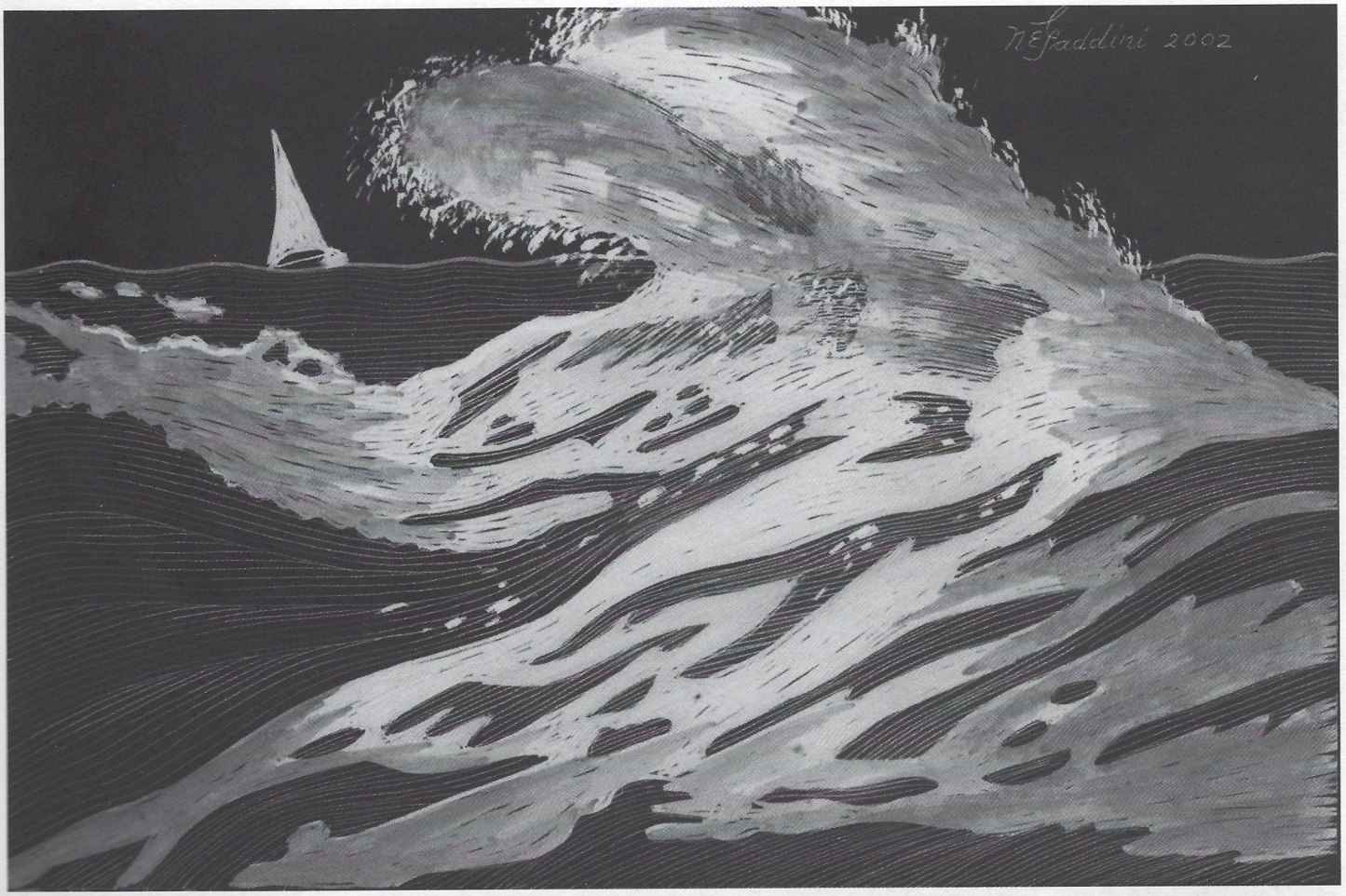
The preliminary pencil drawing shows the basic outlines of the subject. Details are added during the last stage of scratching.



Notice the contour lines in the wave which give it shape and direction of flow.

Always try for dark against light in scratchboard. In other words, if the wave is white, the sky should be black to achieve the best contrast.

Waterproof black ink diluted with water to make a light gray is applied to the lower corners and to shape the upper breaker.



Shading the Picture

When all the main outlines from your preliminary pencil drawing are scratched, then shading begins. At this stage, you will be removing more of the black ink surface by scratching and shading to complete your picture and to create all shades of white, gray, and black.

There are numerous shading effects which include: horizontal, vertical, dots, broken lines, circles, Cs, and wide scraping with the spoon-shaped scraper. Using a mixture of these strokes, you should proceed to shade the dark and the light areas of your pencil drawing.

This is also when you will be adding final details. Remember that numerous effects are possible: from dramatic and quite powerful to very precise and delicate, depending on the techniques you choose to use. You can also achieve different patterns and textures by creating your lines and marks either freehand or with mechanical tools. Lines and dots properly used can create the tone value or the effect of virtually any texture.

Remove the black surface by scratching and shading to complete the picture.

Why is shading important? Because light reveals form. Shading and blending can be used to identify the form or shape of an object. An outline or silhouette of an object reveals only its shape. Observe how light hits an object, and from what angle. Excellent examples of how simple lighting can affect form can be found in the work of Rembrandt.

I prefer to work on the lightest areas first. Consult your pencil drawing as a blueprint guide and remove all black areas that are shown to be white on your drawing with a spoon scribe. A spoon scribe takes off bigger widths and areas. For example, I use the spoon scraper to remove most of the black from the sky. However, I do not like to clean out the white areas completely; I leave remnants of the black in thin, sparse streaks, similar to woodcuts. This adds texture and looks more interesting than plain, solid white. The end effect is more like a woodcut engraving or linoleum-cut print because of the use of larger, cruder, and less detailed black and white lines.

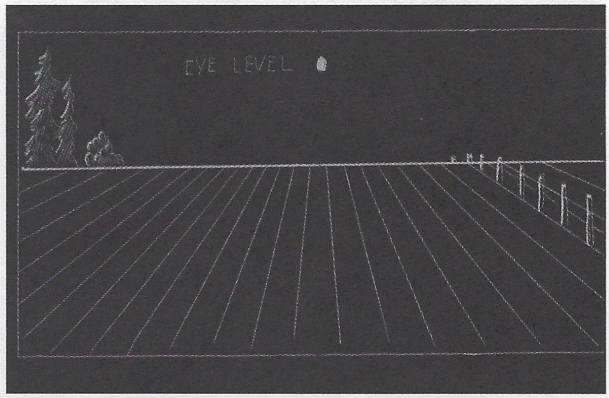
It is important to shade using short strokes, about ½" in length. Use finger action, not your wrist, so you will have more control. There are various shading techniques you can use including using of short strokes and overlapping strokes. Remember that shadows are most important in scratchboard for dramatic effect and to give a solid, firm base to any object. You should *never* scratch a white line around shadows.

It is also important to follow the contours of your subject. For example, a cylindrical column at eye level would have horizontal shading. As you shade upward above eye level, the lines would gradually become more convex, and as you shade below eye level, the lines would become gradually more concave. This applies to tree trunks, poles, silos, and similar structures. [See illustrations on page 42.]

If your strokes are in a straight line, the overlapping of the lines will be visible as straight lines running through your picture. A better way is to stagger areas of your shading so irregular patterns evolve. This is especially good in the sky where such irregular "puffs" can be made to look like soft clouds, rather than the straight line pattern of a grid.

Establishing perspective in the foreground of a picture helps give the picture depth. To establish foreground perspective, determine where the eye level would be. The eye level is actually the level

when you are looking at something, even if you are standing out on a landscape. Next, draw a dot at that level in the center of your picture. Then, radiate guidelines about 1" apart from this dot to all the foreground areas. These lines do not need to be heavy; you can draw them in lightly or even dot them. When you later shade this area, you will have these lines as your guides, and your strokes should go in that direction. What you have done is to give perspective to the entire foreground area in your picture, and it all radiates to that middle point you first established. This technique gives the illusion of distance and perspective and flattens the foreground.



To establish foreground perspective, determine your eye level and draw guidelines from the focal point.

You can still cross-hatch in other directions in different ways, but the guidelines are still there, giving the illusion of depth and flatness.

Details for shading. Note how cross-hatching can affect the overall illusion of depth in the picture.

Contour and convex shapes are essential for other features in a landscape picture. For hills, contour lines help mold the curves, giving the hills their shape. For clouds, you can curve your lines to be cloud shapes, which gives them a roundness, a fluffiness, and establishes various cloud patterns. And, if you want the clouds to be still brighter, you can cross-hatch them.

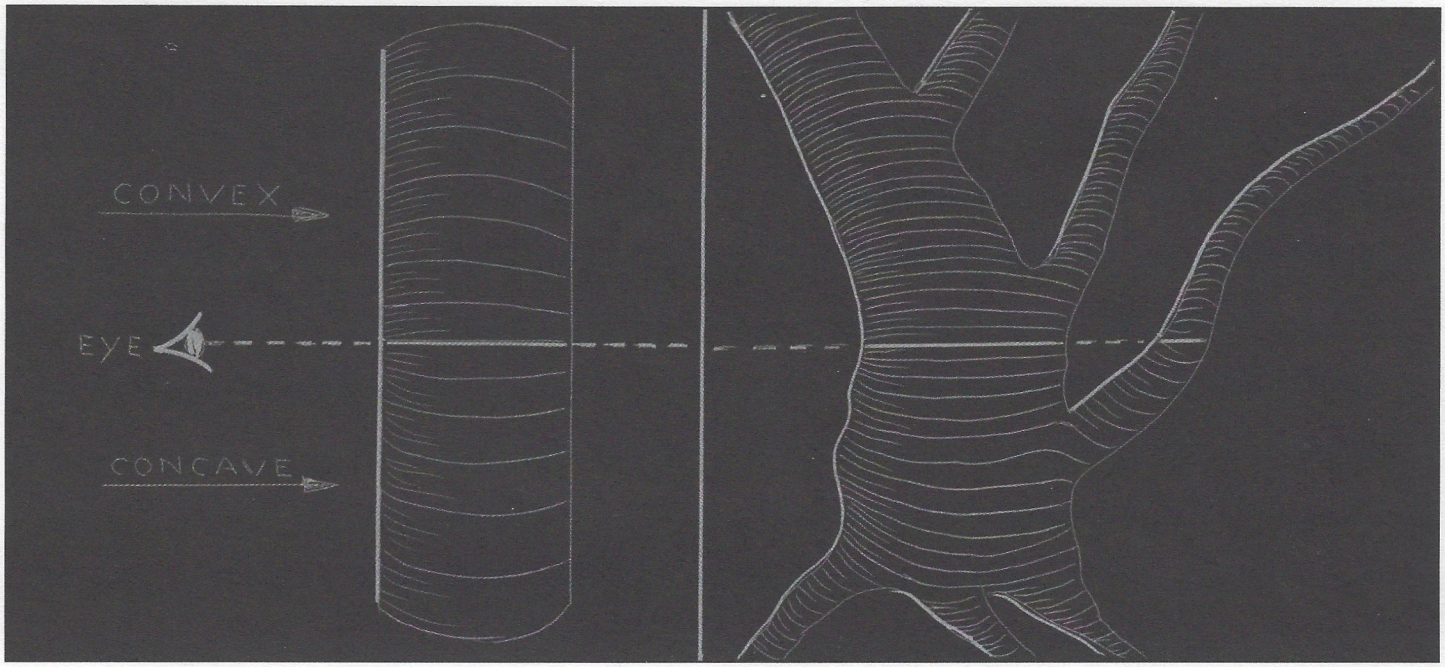
After the white areas are established, do line shading for gray areas and cross-hatching in brighter areas. Start scratching the lightest areas with closely-spaced horizontal lines.

To further lighten such areas, cross-hatch these lines with vertical lines. For additional lightening, diagonal lines are used. However, if this is a black-and-white picture which will eventually be colorized, do not use diagonal lines until the color has been applied. In other words, after coloring, then you can scratch diagonally to lighten the area, which will darken where color has been added.

You can get "messy" shading. This occurs if you scratch lines in the same direction twice. So, plan to hold one direction of lines in abeyance, for use after coloring.

Be sure to frequently look at the picture from a distance, and keep scratching until the composition appears balanced and the subject matter carries well. Remember that black — or the absence of light — is extremely valuable to the final impact of the picture. If you are in doubt, you should probably leave it alone. The biggest, single enemy of scratchboard is overworking.

You will now have a finished black-and-white picture which you can frame as is . . . or go on to color.



Convex and concave lines. In scratchboard, lines can indicate form and must be done properly. As in these two illustrations, when the eye sees an object at eye level, the lines of shading are straight. All lines above eye level are convex (curving down) and all lines below eye level are concave (curving up). This is true for any object — poles, trees, columns, rocks, glass cylinders, and so forth.

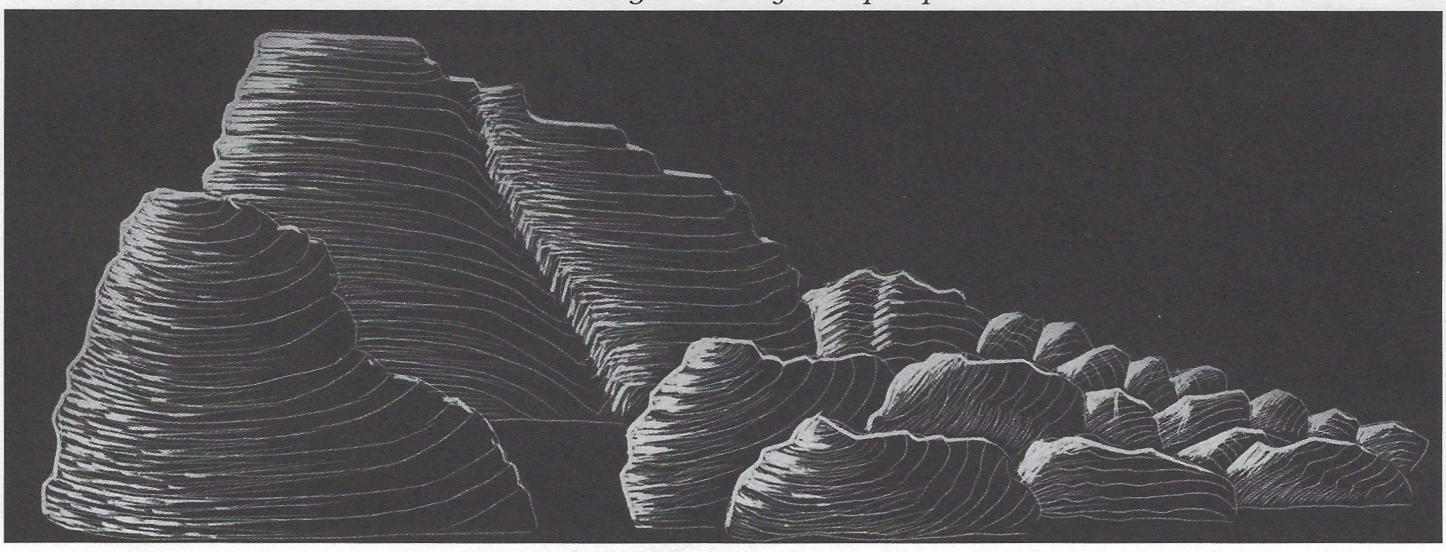
"Mistakes" at this stage can be easily corrected. The best way is to use black waterproof India ink to cover areas with unsatisfactory linework or to repair "mistakes". Let the ink dry thoroughly. Once dry, India ink can be rescratched.

A less efficient yet feasible way to correct mistakes or unsatisfactory linework would be to create a patch by carefully gluing a thinner piece of scratchboard onto the original scratchboard, then redrawing in the collaged area. Under extreme and dire situations where you need to completely rescratch a large area, you can apply black India ink, let it dry, and rescratch.

After the picture is fully scratched with the pointed stylus, then use the spoon stylus to bring out more highlights, middle tones, details, and brighter areas.

After completing the shading so the black-and-white picture looks good and carries well from a distance, you are now ready to color. However, any well-executed scratchboard should be able to stand on its own; the form, tone, and texture should be portrayed adequately with only the black and the white to express them.

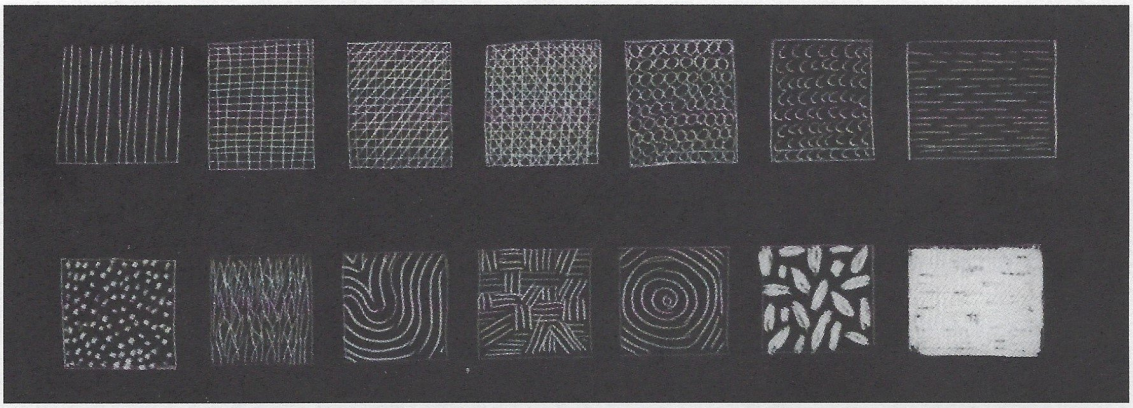
Rocks showing the use of both perspective and convex and concave lines.



Texture and the Techniques of Shading

Shading techniques can be used to create texture. They are varied and include — but are not limited to: lines — single, double, triple, quadruple; broken lines; dots; using various line directions; circles; Cs; and scraping — wide scrapes, total scrape with slight texture lines, and so forth. Texture can range from smooth to very rough, and can be created in a variety of ways such as by varying the thickness of paint, the direction of the brush stroke, or the direction of a scratched line. There can be the actual variance in the physical texture of the surface of the subject, or it can be artificially created by varying the visual texture of the surfaces.

Some examples of various visual textures are directly below.

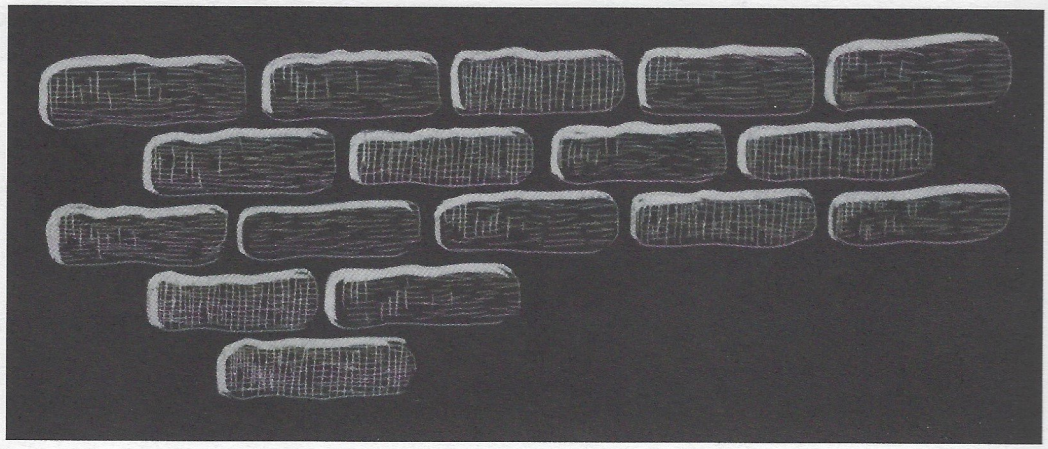


Landscape

Scratchboard is a very effective method for creating depth and realism for landscapes.
When grass is shown in landscapes, longer and heavier lines are shown in the foreground; their length and width decrease in the background.
Notice how well the effect of distance can be created by the size of the scratches: long and deeper scratches create a feeling of close proximity, while shorter and lighter strokes enhance the feeling of being in the distance.

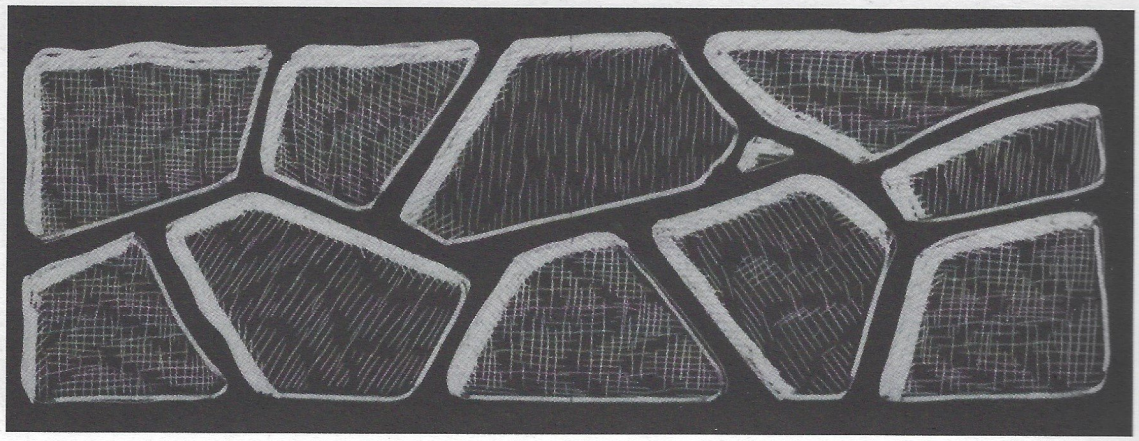
Bricks

Vary the textures. Highlight the left and top sides of each brick.



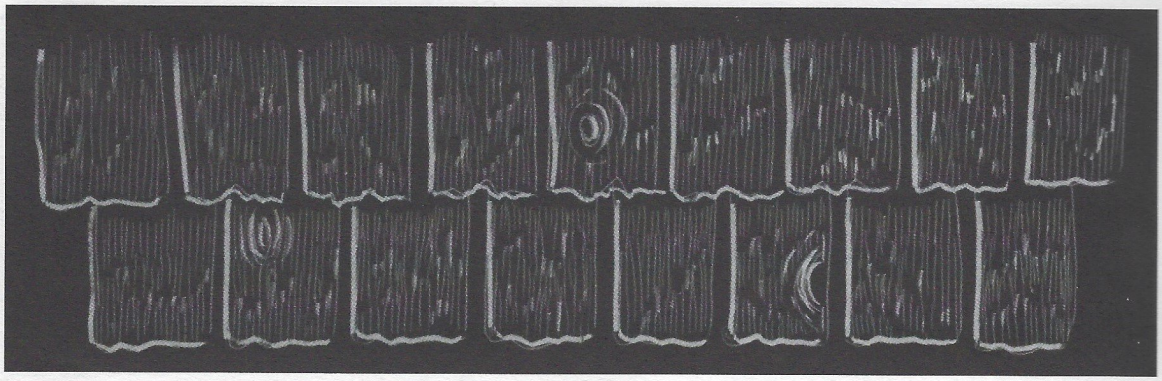
Rocks, Slabs, Tiles

Varied textures. Highlight tops and one side of each slab.



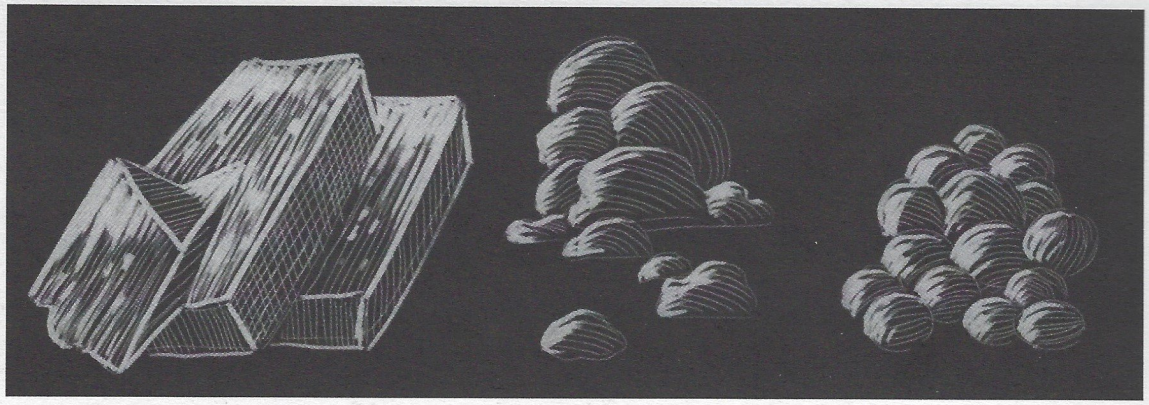
Shingles

Vary texture and add knotholes. Highlight one side and bottom of each shingle.

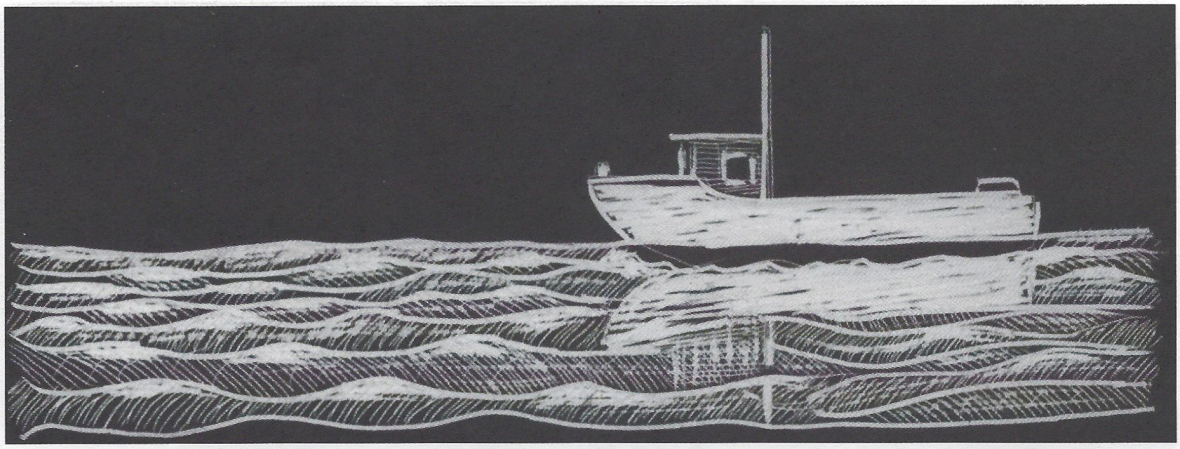


Rocks

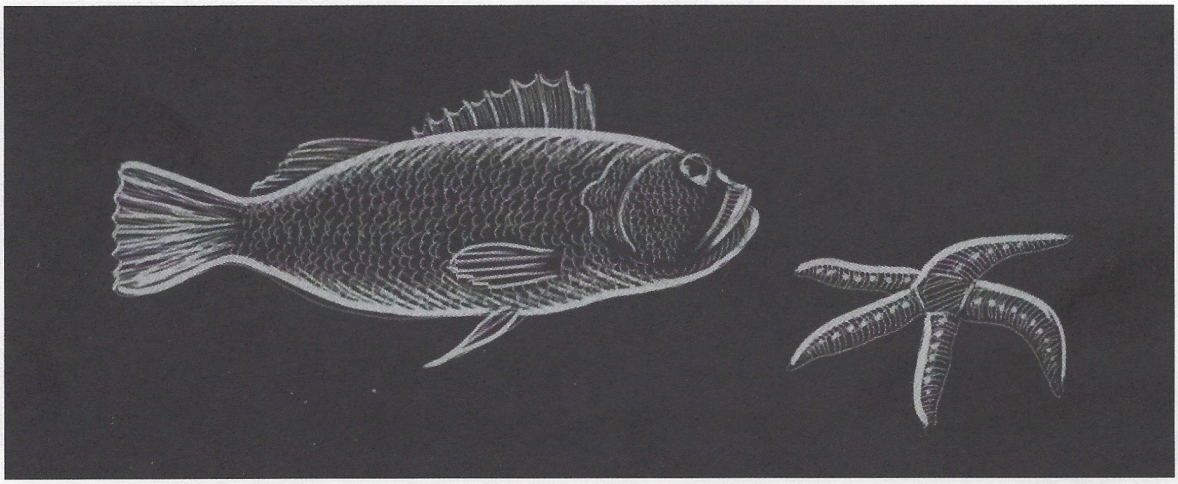
Rock shapes can use varied concave and/or convex lines to create textures and depth. Highlight one side of each rock.



Boats and Water

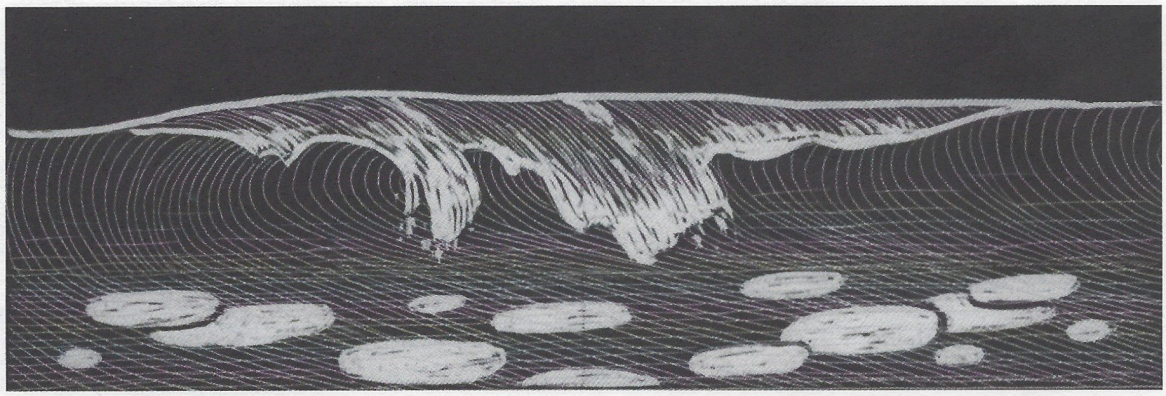


Fish



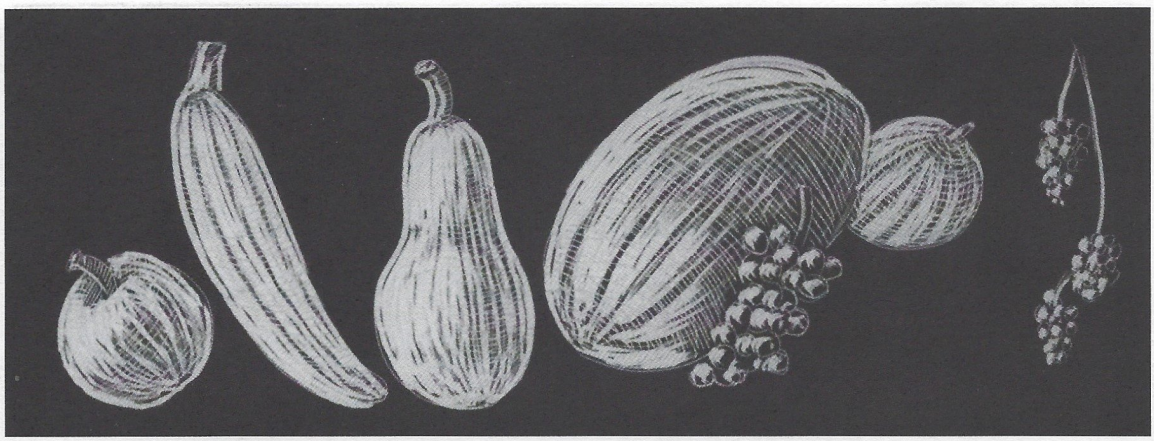
Ocean

Contour lines indicate the shape of the waves.



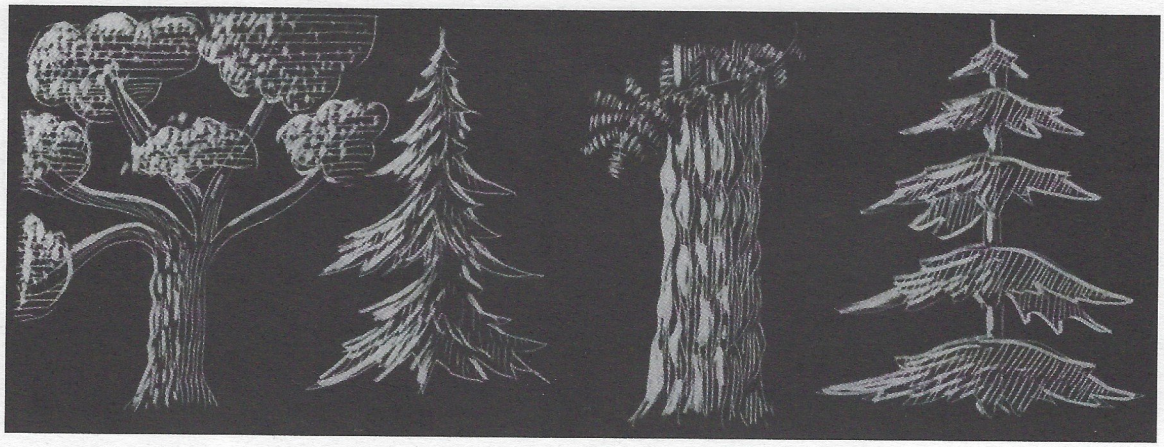
Fruit

Highlight one side of fruits.



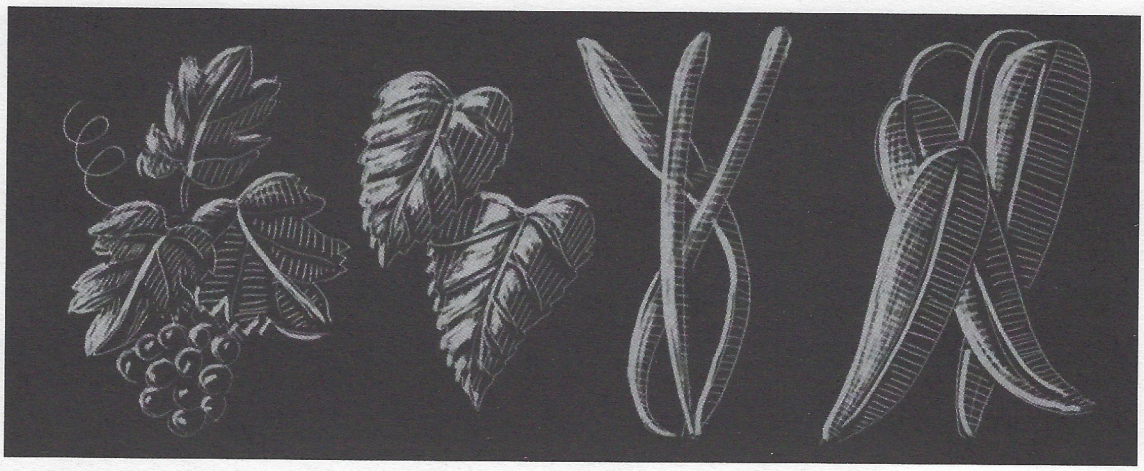
Trees

Highlight one side of trunks and foliage.



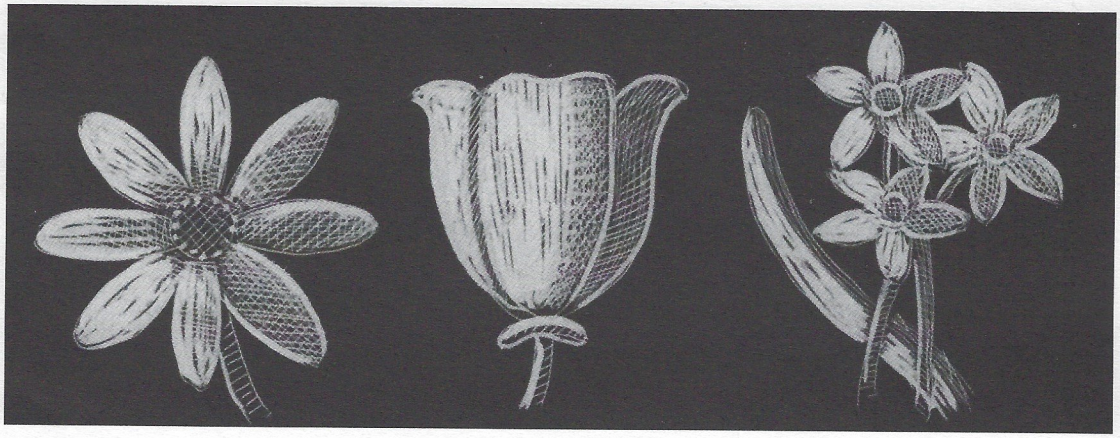
Leaves

Varied textures. Highlight one side.



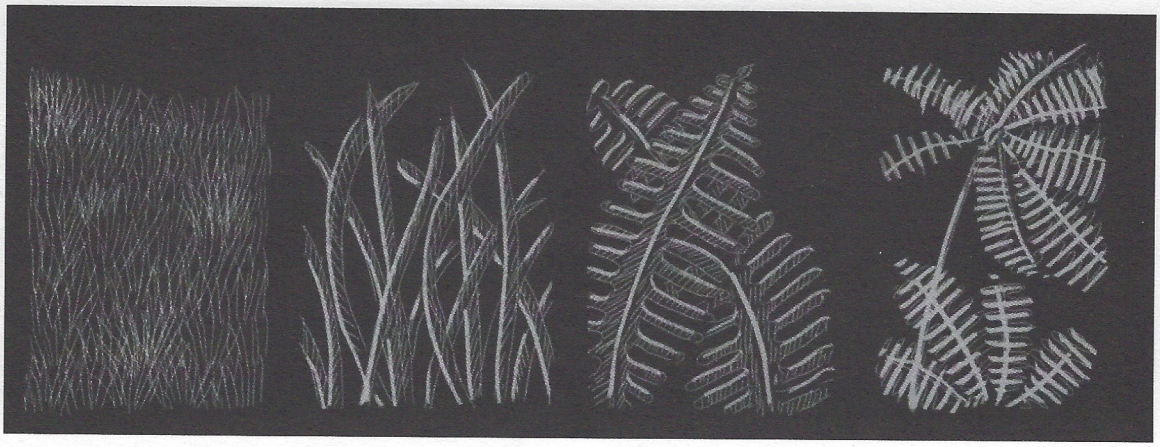
Flowers

Highlight one side.



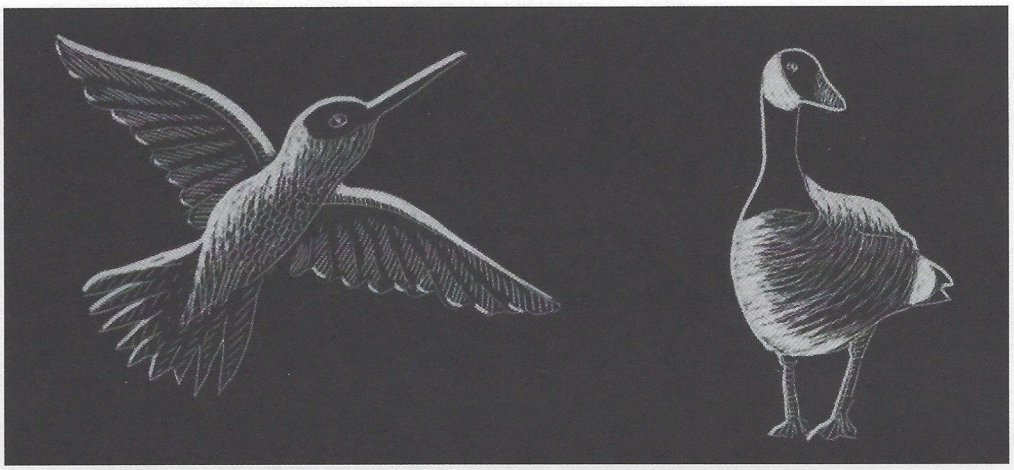
Grasses

Stagger scratches and curves.



Birds

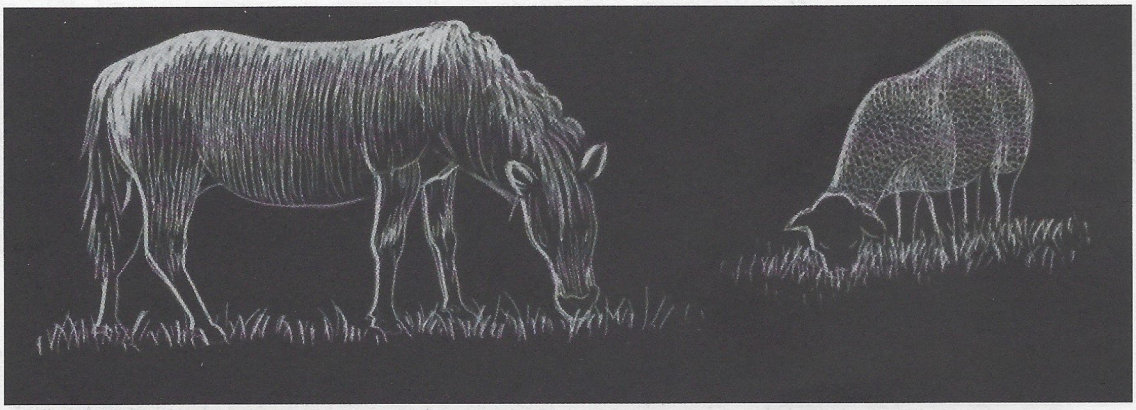
Highlight one side.



Butterflies

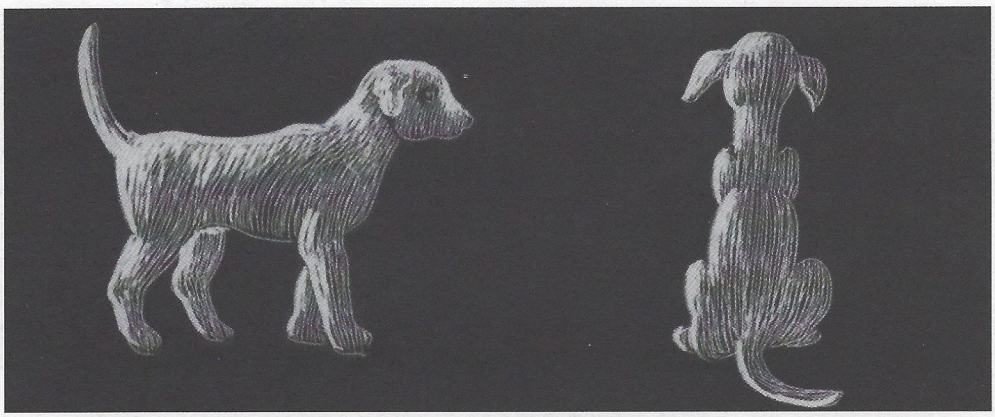
Horse and Sheep

Contour shading on horse. Circle "Os" on the sheep for texture.



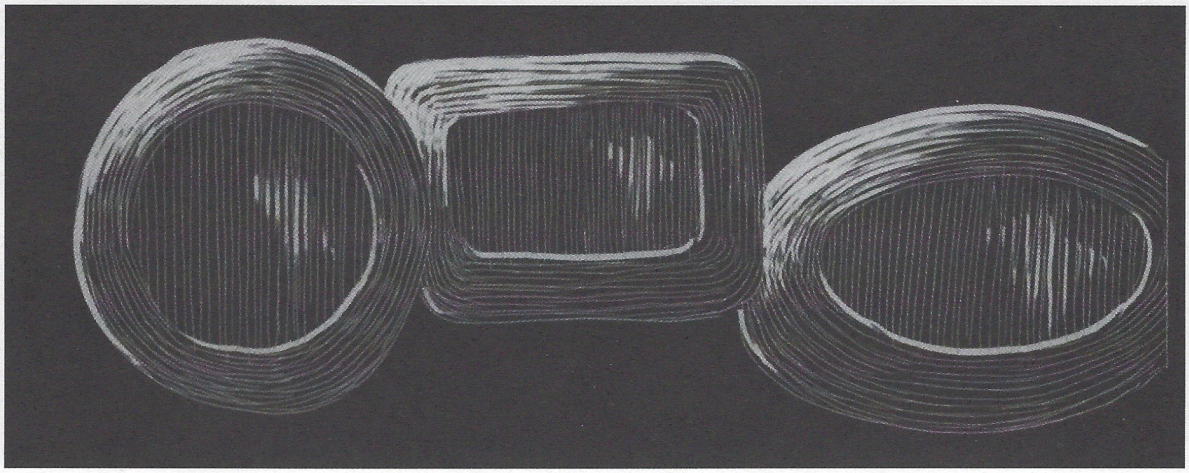
Dogs

Contour shading.



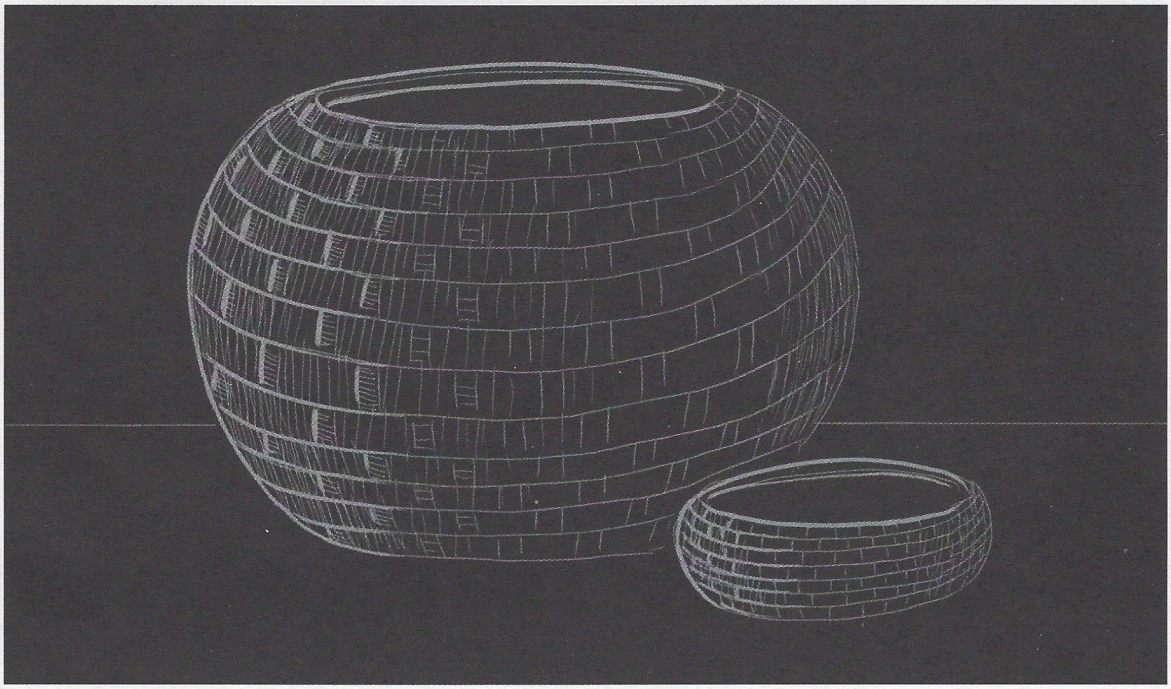
Trays

With top lighting.



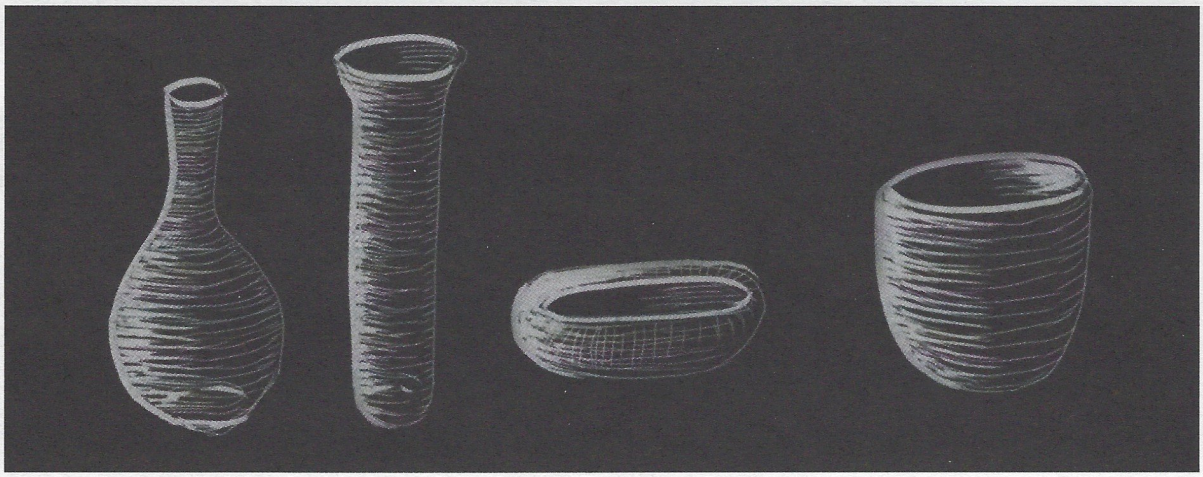
Baskets (with side lighting)

In this particular illustration, most light is on the left side of the baskets, with minor light on the right sides.



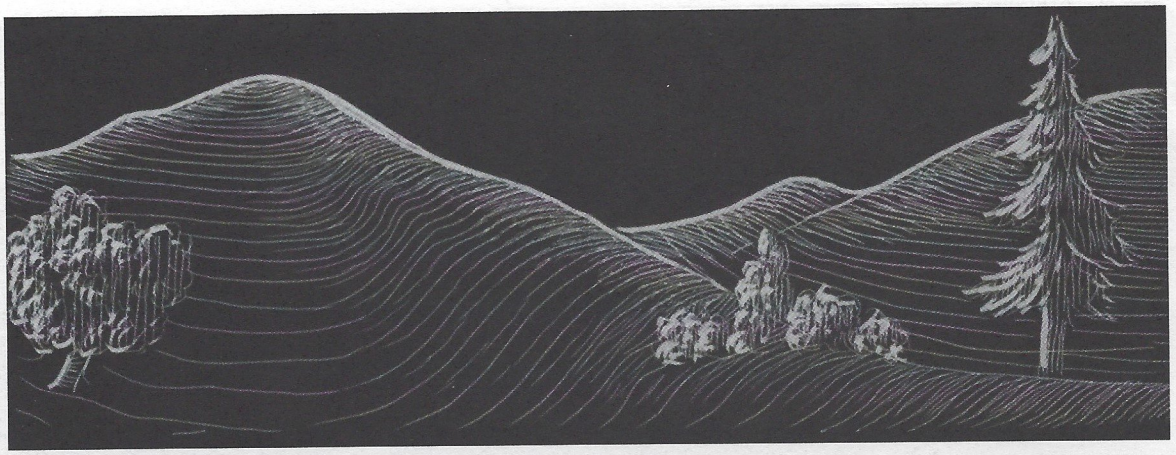
Vases

With side lighting.



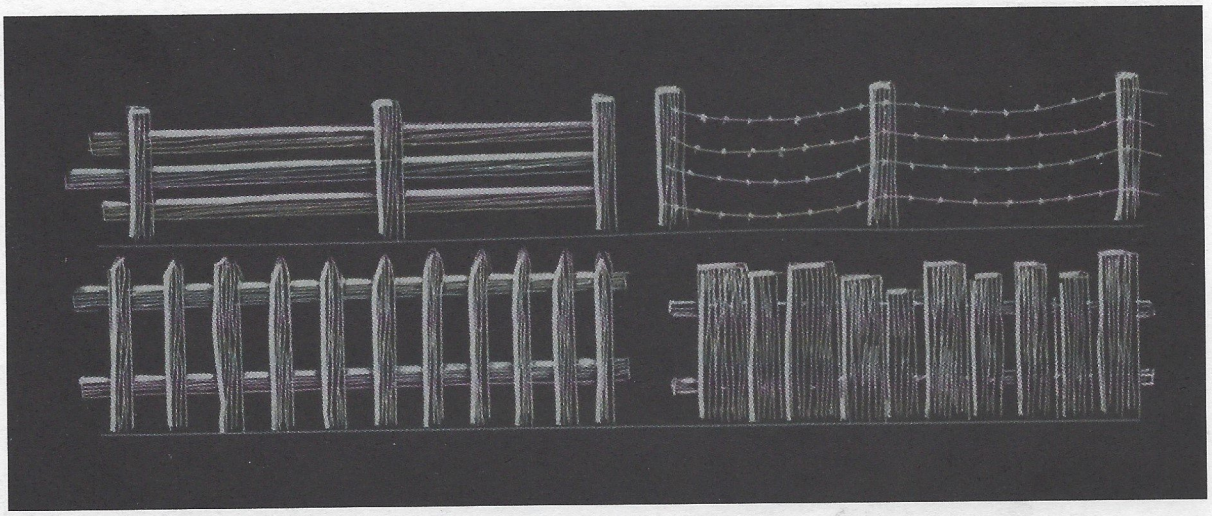
Mountains

Contour lines help mold the curves of the hills.



Fences

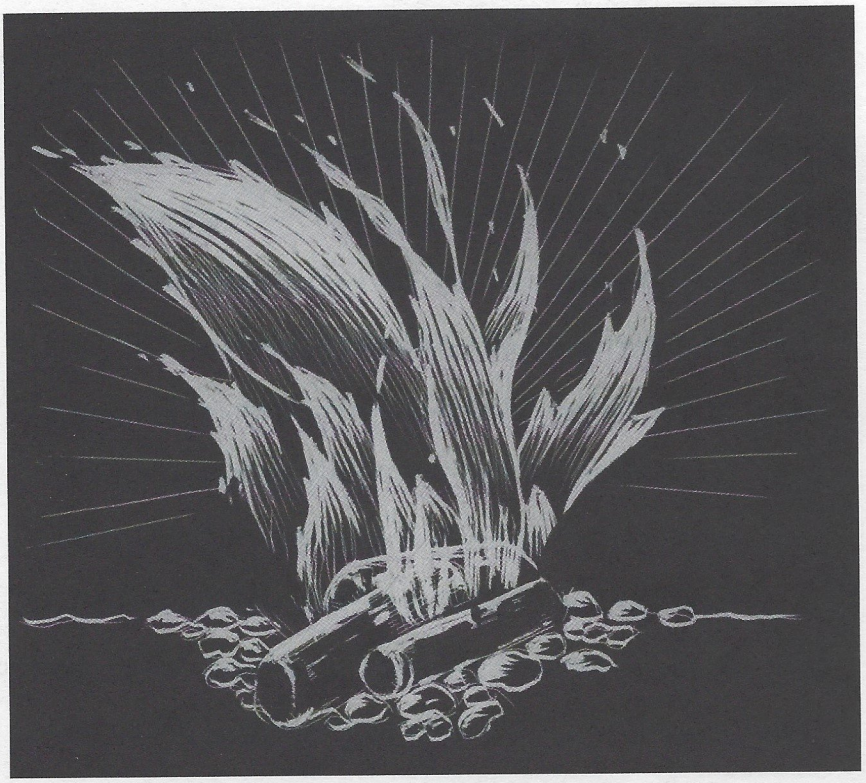
Highlight top and one side of each board.



Fire

A fire or any light source may have radiating lines which all begin at a point within the light source.

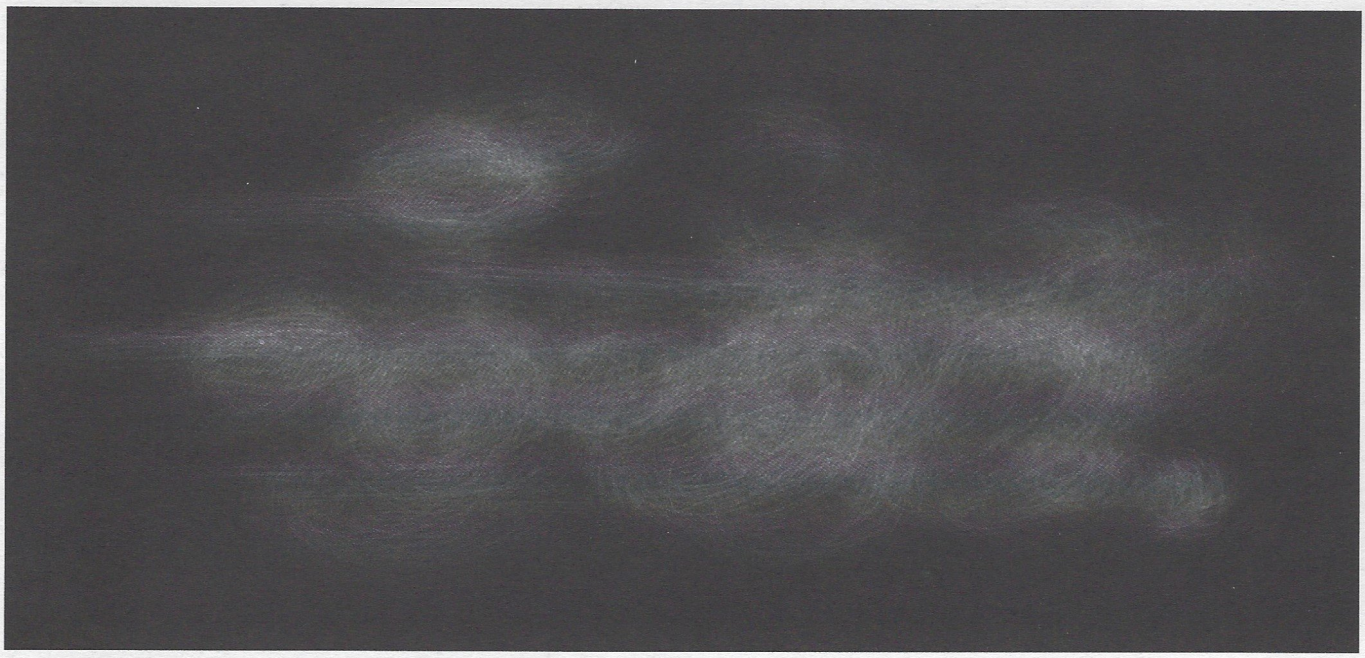
Some artists use a dot at the center to help guide them when they draw rays.



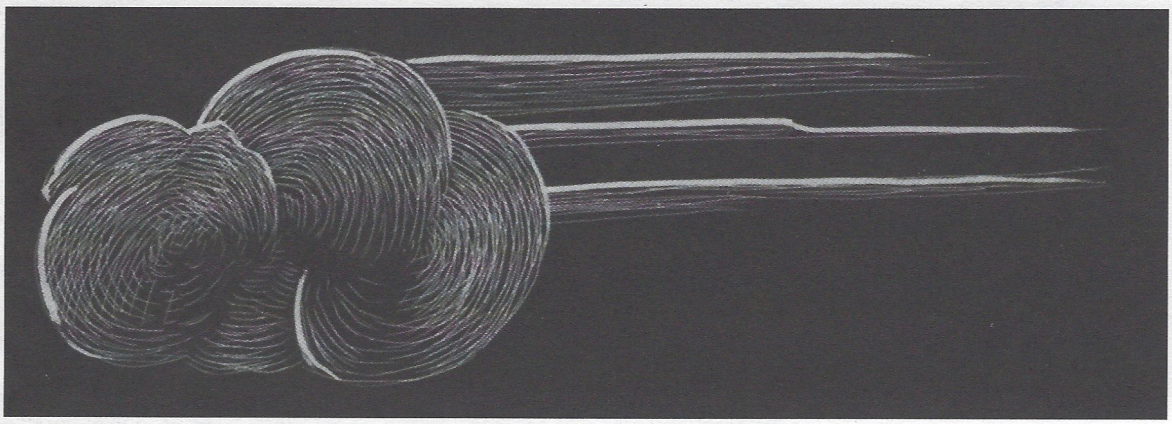
Clouds

You can get varying effects by using different tools and material.
I especially like using a small fiberglas brush to achieve a soft, delicate look to the clouds.

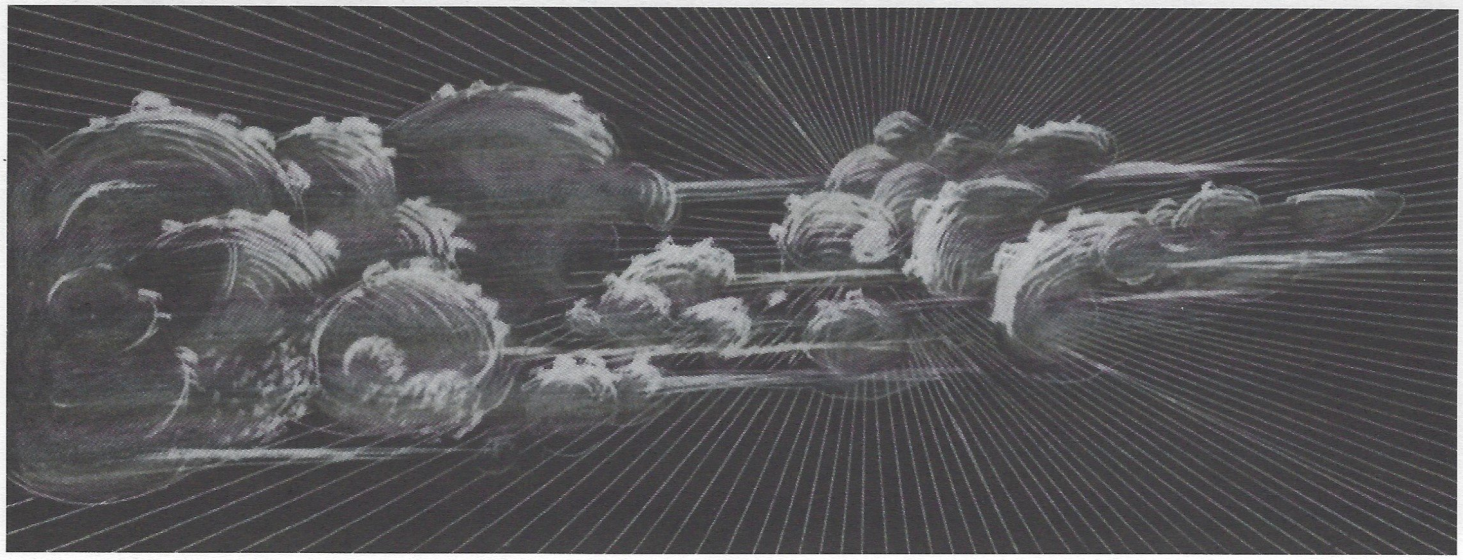
The top picture was created by using steel wool.



The middle illustration was created by using a stylus.

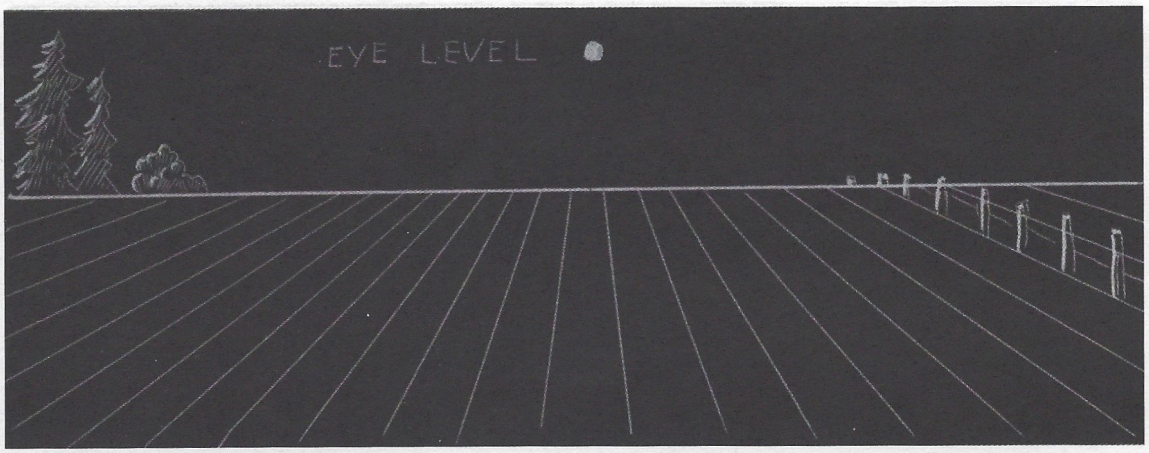


The bottom picture was created by using a combination of both steel wool and a stylus. Notice the rays of light emanating from the center point of interest. Overlapping lines can make puffy, soft-looking clouds. Curved, contour shading forms cloud patterns.

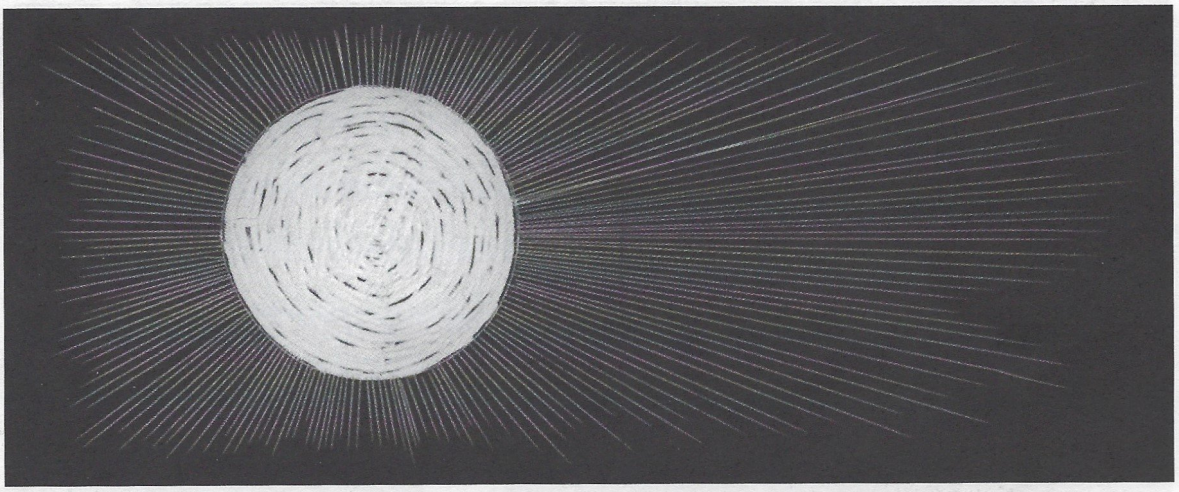


Some Additional Scratchboard Composition Techniques

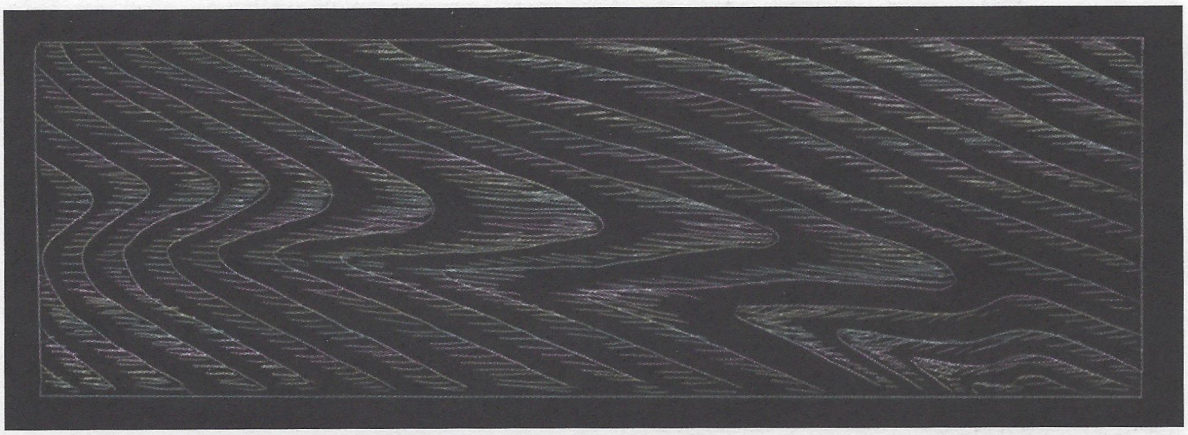
Foreground:
To establish foreground perspective, determine your eye level and draw guidelines from the focal point. In other words, radiate lines from the focal point which is in center position.
[See pages 23-24.]



Radiating Lines:
Here is an example of sunlight. Use a ruler and radiate lines with a pencil on the scratchboard. Then, shade in their directions.



Woodgrain:
Leave random streaks of black to create texture such as in a woodcut.

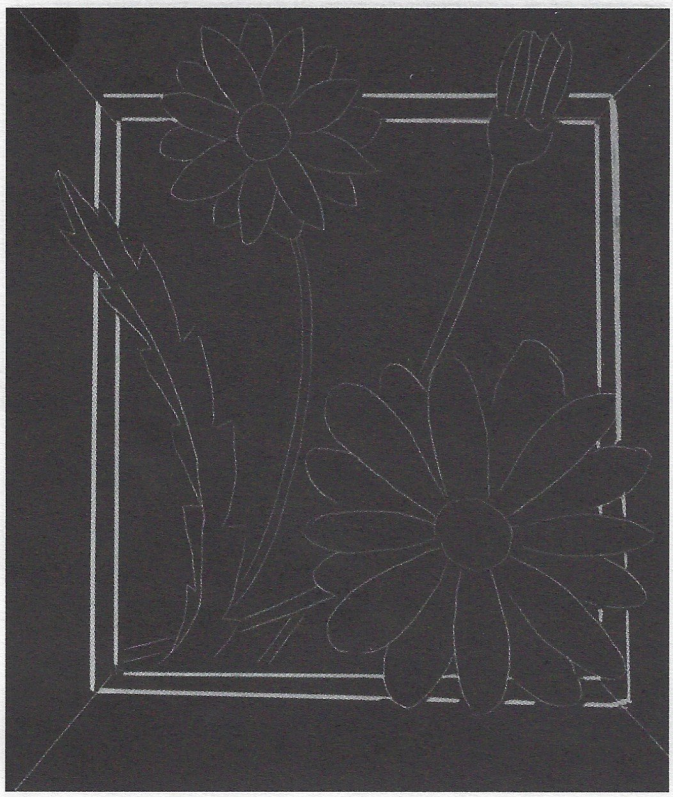


Using Pen and India Ink with Scratchboard:
Occasionally, it may be simpler to add a few black lines with a pen and ink to a white area, especially if it is a rather large white area, rather than attempting to cut the lines.

Drawing a Frame:

To create a unique look to your art, try drawing beyond the frame created in your scratchboard picture.

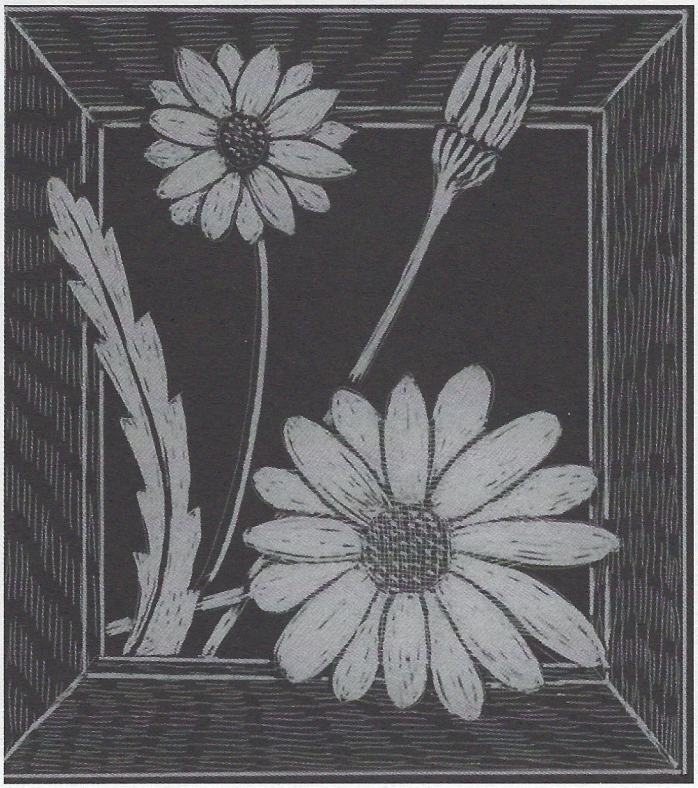
1. First, lightly scratch the inner outline of the frame, one inch more or less. Mark diagonals at each corner. *[See right.]*



3. Now scratch as shown on the left side and top to indicate a wood grain. Vary your scratch lengths to create a wavy, black pattern. Make the lines irregular like true woodgrain. If such black lines are too prominent, subdue them by re-scratching a few lines over them, as shown in the frame at the bottom and right sides.

Note that the left and top part of the frame show what the woodgrain-type lines would be like when you first start scratching. The right and bottom are finished scratching. The key is to make your lines so they are not so obvious and do not detract from your pictured image.

2. Now draw your picture so that parts of it project out of the frame, a three-dimensional effect, such as with the flowers to the left.



Coloring the Scratchboard

Your black-and-white scratchboard can be colored with transparent, fadeproof inks. So, after your picture appears to be satisfactory in black and white, then prepare to color it. However, not every drawing or design is suitable to be colored. Adding color to black scratchboard not only adds impact and tends to soften the contrast between black and white, but it also adds definition to the subject. In some cases, such as in book illustrations or a jacket design, rather than full color, only a second color is added to achieve the envisioned effect and enhance the impact. The range of hues and intensities of color will add an entirely new dimension to your art.

Gualala River

In reality, any water-based paint can be used to color your black-and-white scratchboard drawing — watercolor, acrylics, or inks. Even oils, felt-tip pens, or any other non-film-forming paint can be used. However, I would recommend that you do not use acrylics, watercolors, or oils because they have too much opacity and will be visible on the black surface. They also have a tendency to cover up your textured scratching. Drawing inks will also crack less when dry, and being thinner, can be scraped out with more ease and accuracy. Nevertheless, when coloring a large area, maintaining uniform ink distribution can be difficult, especially for a beginner.

I use transparent, fadeproof inks, because they are not visible on the black surface . . . just in case I accidentally wander out of the scratched area or lines. For years, I used FW (water soluble) Artist Acrylic inks. Currently, I prefer the Dr. Ph. Martin brand inks and Hydrus inks, both made by the same company. I have found these types of inks to work best. But, be careful to read the labels because some are opaque. Be sure the label states, "transparent". Some of these inks are extremely strong and concentrated, and for most uses, must be diluted with water. These inks also retain their color better over time.

Before starting to color, be sure to dust your artwork thoroughly with a soft brush. Then, assemble what you will need in close proximity. I like to have all my bottles of ink, a water squirt bottle within handy reaching distance, and several small trays or lids to dilute one drop of color with several squirts of water. Some ink bottles, such as Dr. Martins, have their own droppers.

Estero Americano

Of course, you also should use a

variety of brushes to apply the color. Use an assortment to achieve different effects. You can use flat ones to put in a puddle of color and to cover a large area. Use riggers, which have longer, tapered ends with a good point, for extremely little areas for fine detail. You can use liners, rounds — experiment to find what you like best.

For example, for a blue sky, I like diluted turquoise. I apply it with a soft brush, about 1" wide, making a pass quickly across the sky. If excess ink appears in any spot, I dab a soft paper towel (such as VIVA) on such spots to remove them.

Always use a light touch when coloring on scratchboard. Do not press hard on your brush as you stroke and do not rub back and forth because occasionally some of the black ink from the surface of the scratchboard will loosen and come off, creating a dirty black smear or "mud" in the middle of what you are painting. This is especially true when using Essdee scratchboard. This smearing seems to vary in the different batches and depends on the manufacturing process. Sometimes, I receive some scratchboard that does not smear at all. But, by careful, soft, and quick brushing, you can minimize this effect. This does not occur with Claybord. Decide what color you are going to use, put it on, and leave it. If you decide you do not like it, let the color dry, and then later scratch it out partially or totally.

Poppies are drawn coming through the frame for an entirely different effect. *See also page 52.*

The picture can then be colored with transparent, fadeproof inks.

For leaves, I like to mix green with yellow. For variety, I will mix green, yellow, and a little orange or red to gray the foliage color.

Never scratch a wet surface. Be sure to allow each coat of applied ink to dry *thoroughly*; this takes only a few minutes.

When the entire scratchboard is colored, you will notice that the picture appears dull and less sparkling and brilliant; the coloring has diminished some of your highlights. To overcome this and to bring the colors back, re-scratch with the spoon or pin through the colors. This will remove the color, which comes off easily, right down to and revealing the white chalk and bring back your highlights. When you scratch back highlights in a colored area, you will add volume and light to your composition.

This additional scratching can also be used to soften any line or darkened areas. If a certain color is too strong and/or dark, you can lighten it by parallel scratching or cross-hatching. These new white scratches can be colored again with a different color to bring an amazing variety of tonal values into the painting. Scratch and recolor to get spectacular results.

Be adventurous! As you experiment, you will discover exciting and beautiful effects. Notice the effects which can be created when using one color compared to several colors. Experiment with mixing the colored ink with the black, and then scraping the color partially away, leaving only a

Additional scratching through the colored inks brings back highlights.

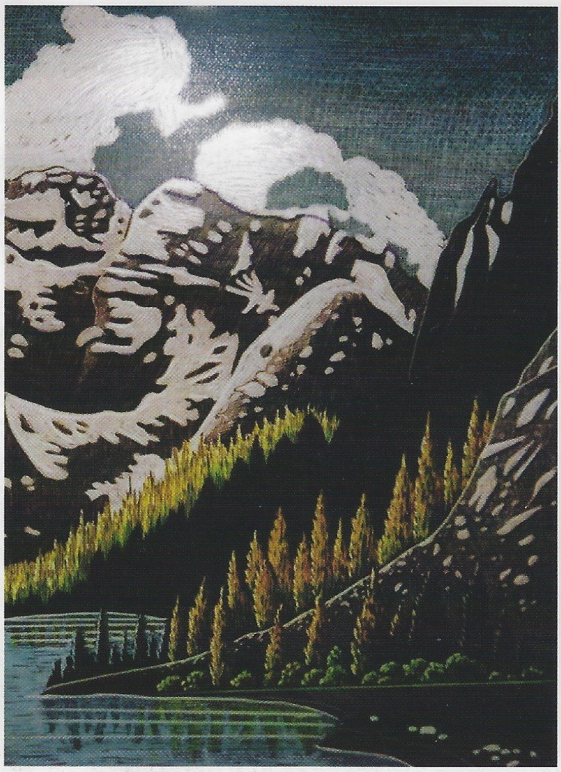
subtle hint of the color stained on the surface of the scratchboard. You can scrape more and increase the lightening of the color, which can create a soft glow. Or highlight the area, as described above by completely removing what remains.

A Sampling of Norman's Colored Scratchboard Art

Mount Shasta still life

Redwood Forest

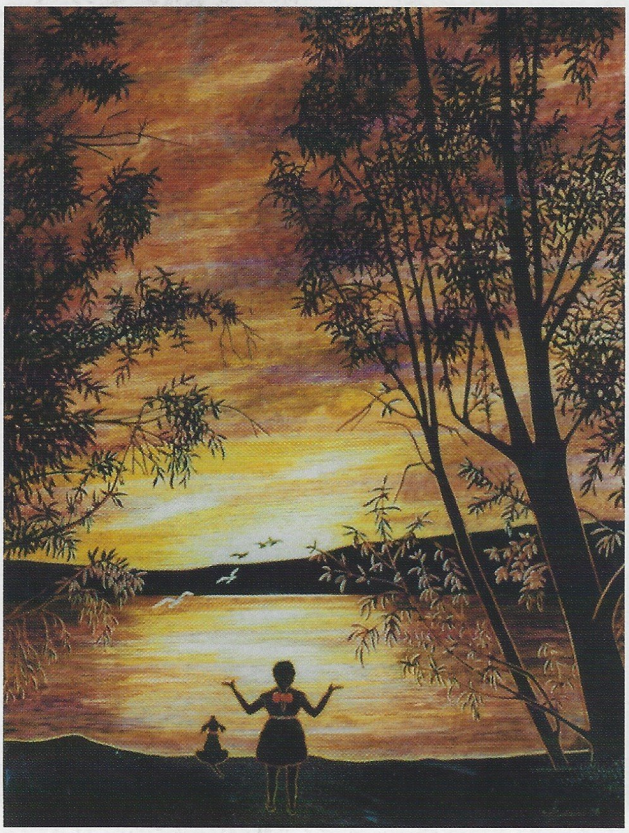
Golden Gate Bridge



Austrian Alps

Surrealistic Serenity: Russian River, Wine and Roses

Dutch Bill Creek, Occidental



Sunset at Tomales Bay

Flowers of the Sun

Final Scratching

As determined in your pencil sketch, the light source will come from either the right side, the left side, or it may be backlit. Whichever it is, imagine a light source at one of those positions, and using a spoon scratcher which scrapes the widest, scratch all sides of objects where such light would strike. Usually the tops as well as the sides. This clarifies the objects, gives a light sparkle, and adds dimension to the entire picture.

If after scraping you end up with too much light, or a lighter edge which appears too prominently, you can always repaint it. Retouch the areas with light yellow or orange to tone them down, or even black, if you want to do away with it entirely or correct any aspect of your picture.

Removing Fingerprints

If you get an oily fingerprint on your scratchboard's surface, which is easy to do especially as a beginner, use the spoon-shaped scraper and scrape deeply into a scrap piece of scratchboard to make a small pile of chalk powder. Dump this small pile onto the fingerprint. Using an artist's soft paintbrush, move the pile back and forth over the fingerprint. It will absorb most of the oil and significantly reduce the visibility of the print.

If you are using Claybord, you can spray and seal your artwork with Claybord Fixative, which will dissolve any fingerprints and even out any variations in your color.

Dutch Bill Creek 1999

Finishing the Picture

When the painting and additional scratching is complete, then I spray it once lightly with a spray varnish. This will protect your scratchboard from fingerprints and eliminates the undesirable visual effect of paint on the black surface.

I generally prefer to use gloss Krylon crystal clear acrylic coating or Pro Arts Gloss Spray. Both dry to an excellent gloss in just a few minutes. Just be careful when you get to the bottom of a can because sometimes instead of emitting a fine spray, the can emits unacceptably large droplets.

In my experience, the Pro Arts brand gloss appears thicker and has more sheen when it dries.

The varnish will also accentuate and intensify the colors, deepen and darken the black to an intense black, and reduce the visibility of any ink that may have strayed onto the black. When applying color, some colors are bound to get on the black surface. They do not show prominently but appear as a soft smudge. Another effect of the spray is to eliminate any hint of any color on the black.

A Few Tips About Scratching

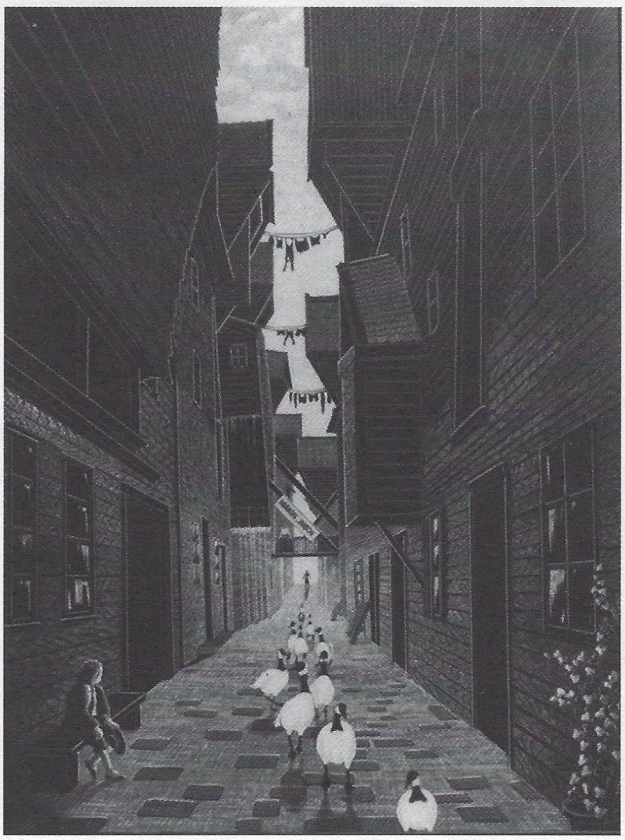
Sometimes when you are scratching a large illustration, you will hold your hand in a certain position for a long time, or a tool might rest uncomfortably in your fingers. The best thing to do is to take breaks. When you take a break, you can massage your hand, shake it out, or simply just rest it.

You can try wrapping your tool handles with tape, a strip of foam rubber, cotton padding, or even an adhesive bandage. You can also try a bandage on a finger if you find that the knife or nib pressure makes it uncomfortable to hold for long periods of time.

And, try to always allow yourself plenty of time to finish your piece and, if you have one, meet your deadline.

Scratching also creates a lot of chalk dust, and it will collect. You can use a drafting or soft-bristled brush or even a soft chamois cloth or a paper towel (I prefer VIVA) to clean the dust off your board and working surface.

St. Mark's Square, Venice



A Side Street in Sweden

Final Touches

The finished scratchboard picture can now be matted and framed. You can pay a frame shop or gallery to mat and frame your art, or you can do it yourself. Some people also choose to use a foam backing.

Regular glass can be used, but non-glare glass is preferable. Non-glare glass costs about double the price of ordinary glass, but it does reduce many reflections which are visible in regular glass. Some artists feel non-glare glass will dull their picture; it may a little, but scratchboard is so pronounced, I believe the effect is minimal. As mentioned earlier, if using Claybord, your artwork may be framed without glass.

Most galleries frown on highly-colored mats, preferring light-colored or white mats for fine art. Personally, I find the white mat to be "too chalky" and bright — a distraction to the painting. I favor the lightly-tinted mat in warm tones of yellow or cream. The mat then ties into those tones in the picture and adds, not distracts, from your artwork.

To mat a scratchboard, you can purchase and use a mat cutter, or you can cut a mat by hand. Good quality mat cutters cost hundreds of dollars, but there are more affordable versions. Mat cutters can be especially time-saving for artists who must cut many mats. They also allow you to be more accurate, achieve perfect corners, and to design and use a variety of cuts.

I have been cutting and designing my own mats and constructing my own frames by hand for years. It is not as difficult as it sounds.

Before I begin, I always dust all lint and residue off my finished artwork, then proceed to seal my artwork by spraying it lightly with an acrylic gloss spray varnish (or a comparable matte fixative). The fixative will also dissolve and eliminate fingerprints. Then, I begin by simply placing the finished scratchboard on a mat which is larger than the scratchboard. The mat is placed upside down on a table or surface you can cut on. Be sure the surface is large enough to easily work on. Measure both sides, the top, and the bottom margins to equal lengths. Using a razor blade in a holder or an X-Acto knife, cut out the opening (or the center of the mat) to ¼" to ½" less than the size of the scratchboard, creating a window which will overlap your work when the mat is mounted.

It is best to place a scrap piece of mat board underneath the piece you are cutting to protect the surface area of whatever you are cutting on (table top, light table, and so forth) and the blade.

Next, place the mat face down on a table and position your scratchboard centered evenly on it and over the cut out, so ⅛" to ¼" overlaps the cut out. This overlap precludes the picture from falling through the hole, which could happen!

Now you can mount the scratchboard. I use tape on all four sides, completely around the picture. Normally, I use a filament strapping or packaging tape. This type of tape is tough, sticky, and seems to last for a very long time. Ordinary masking tape loses its stickiness too quickly.

Sometimes, I will also use a ruler to draw a perfectly straight, little black line right outside of the cut-out window area, which is around all the edges of the picture which is now matted. This is called "French Style" and creates the illusion of a double-mat. This style seems to finish off the edge, and the mat board does not look as bare. I use a black felt-tip pen to make a line about one-sixteenth inch wide. You can use any size. A double line is also attractive. Just be sure not to overrun your ends because you should not overrun your corners. Use a ruler so you end up with perfectly straight lines.

The picture is now ready for framing.

Frames can be purchased from art stores or catalogues in kit form, complete with hardware and attachments for hanging, and ready for assembling. I prefer the "You Frame" Sectional Frame kit from Structural Industries [in Hicksville, New York] since its unobtrusive ¼" black or gold aluminum edge is strong, gets the picture up on the wall at a minimum price, and is easy to assemble.

As mentioned previously, if you are using Claybord, you can frame it without glass or a mat. Claybord is less costly and less fragile. You will still need to spray the finished Claybord artwork with fixative to seal it and keep the ink colors smooth and consistent. This smooth surface protects your artwork over time and allows it to be framed without glass or a mat.

If using Essdee, you must be more careful for the scratchboard is much more fragile. To frame artwork created using Essdee scratchboard, using glass and a mat is more essential. Some people use a ¼" foam backing. Art stores carry it. The foam backing protects the picture and does not absorb moisture. It is a waterproof plastic which has a greater life than cardboard, which warps, absorbs moisture, and after years go by, gets crumbly. It also looks more professional to frame with it.

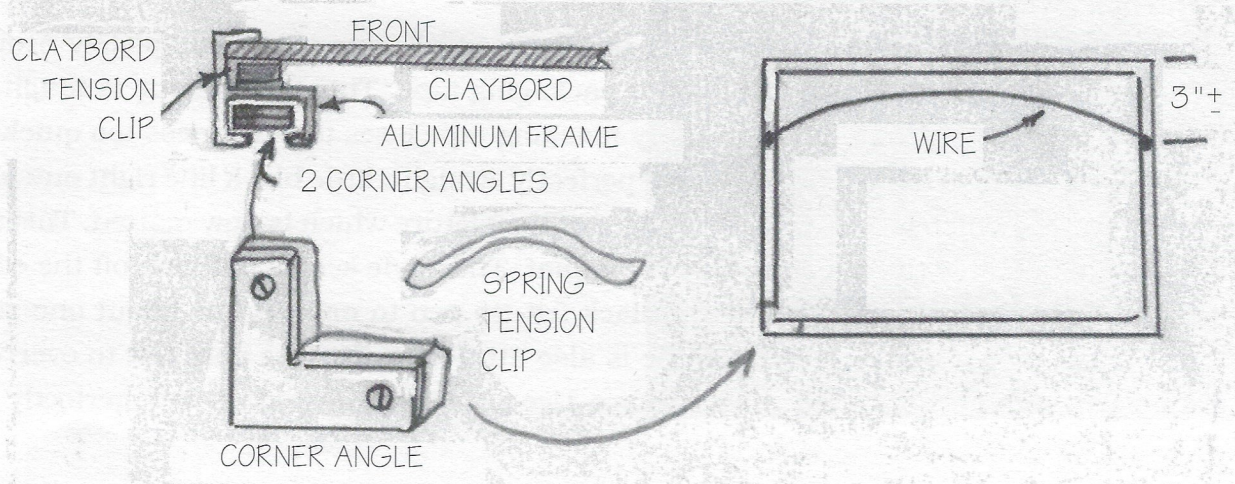
If you frame at home and are using glass, be sure the environment is clean. I have often seen pictures framed with little pieces of dirt under the glass. It detracts from the work. So, always clean your desk off and be sure there is no lint. After assembling your frame, then bring the glass out. You should clean and polish your glass, holding it up to a light to be sure it is clear, and then use a piece of paper to handle the glass so you do not get any fingerprints inside the frame where the picture is. [You can always clean the outside of the glass!]

After this, you slide the picture in and complete the framing.

If you put a wire on, the proper method is to measure about ⅓ of the way down on the side (from the top) and put your fixture at that point. If you are using a wood frame, you would screw in one of the screw eyes there; if using a metal frame kit, there is a little fixture that screws in there. Put your wire so that it is fairly snug but a little slack, maybe one inch. There must be some slack so the picture can be hung on a hook. If you get it too tight and snug, it is too difficult to hang.

Framing and adding a wire to hang your finished work

Claybord is 18" x 24" and can be cut in half for a 12" x 18" frame or in quarters for a 9" x 12" frame [see page 28]. When using Claybord, no mat or glass is necessary, thus it is cheaper to frame. If a mat is used, then glass is needed to stabilize the cardboard mat.

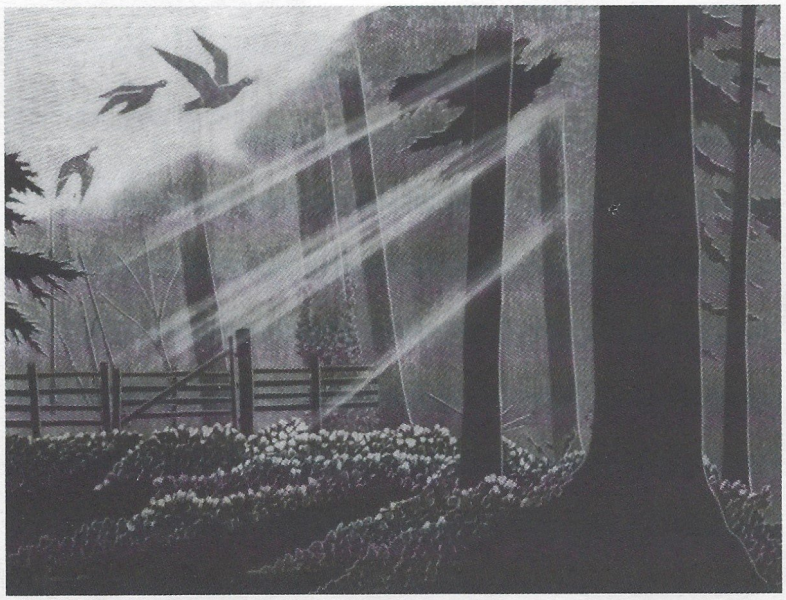


What If You Wish to Pursue Scratchboard More Seriously?

You have tried scratchboard and discover that you want to become more serious about it. Scratching is taking up more and more of your time, and you are spending a lot of money on materials.

Stand back, and with a cold, empirical eye, evaluate your situation. Maybe you should be buying wholesale. Artists do not always concern themselves with practical matters, but being a good business person helps increase your profit and thereby helps you be self-supporting. Even a hobby can become a full-time venture.

So, if you find yourself spending a lot of time scratching, and you sometimes think about exhibiting or selling your finished pieces, it is time to start thinking about buying your materials wholesale and possibly getting yourself a Resale Permit. With a resale permit, you do not pay sales tax on materials — when your art piece is sold, you charge tax on the entire sale. You can get more information on this by contacting your state's Board of Equalization office.



Dawn in my Forest

For What Other Purposes Can Scratchboard Be Used?

Scratchboard can be printed successfully on a number of surfaces, such as aluminum, stainless steel, copper, plastics, wood, cloth, and china. Scratchboard pictures have appeared on coasters, table mats, trays, tea towels, articles of clothing, posters, plates, and clock faces.

More and more artists are discovering how well this medium can be used for gift items. Utilizing a silkscreen printing process, scratchboard illustrations transfer well onto earthenware and other surfaces.

Of course, as it was in the earlier part of the century, scratchboard illustrations are still used in advertising and promotion. Scratchboard's clarity of reproduction, even on the cheapest quality newsprint, makes it a good choice to promote a product. In fact, the classical, wood engraving or woodcut technique utilized by some scratchboard artists has been frequently used in many recent promotional marketing schemes.

. . . Now start scratching!

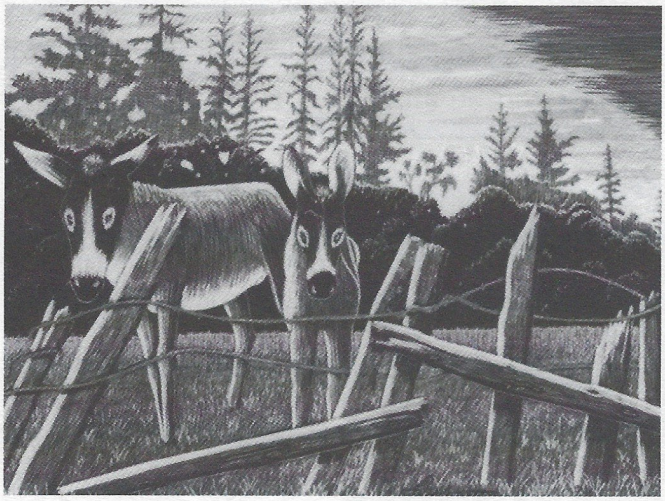
More of Norman's Scratchboard Art

The scratchboard drawings on these two pages and on page 69 were originally created in color but are reproduced here in black and white. The comments dispersed throughout these pages were unsolicited comments from people who attended the April 2002 Apple Blossom Art Festival in Sebastopol, California, and voted for the "Most Popular Artist" in the show, an award which Norman won. These comments are taken from the ballots cast and were all made regarding Norman's scratchboard art pieces at that show.

"Spectacular!"

"Outstanding — a mental treat."

"Stunning!"



Amazing Fence, Jonive Road, Sebastopol

"remarkable detail & depth"

"Great detail — excellent composition & color."

"Excellent color & Old World style"

The Impeccable Artist
Leaning Tower of Pisa, Italy

"Striking, most different. Great detail & precision."

"Like the effect of light and shadow."

"Very intricate. Fantastic!! I LOVE IT!!!"

"It's just like a photograph! Beautiful!"

Julliard Park, Santa Rosa

Rock Fish, Bodega Bay

"Wonderful!"

"unusually compelling style"

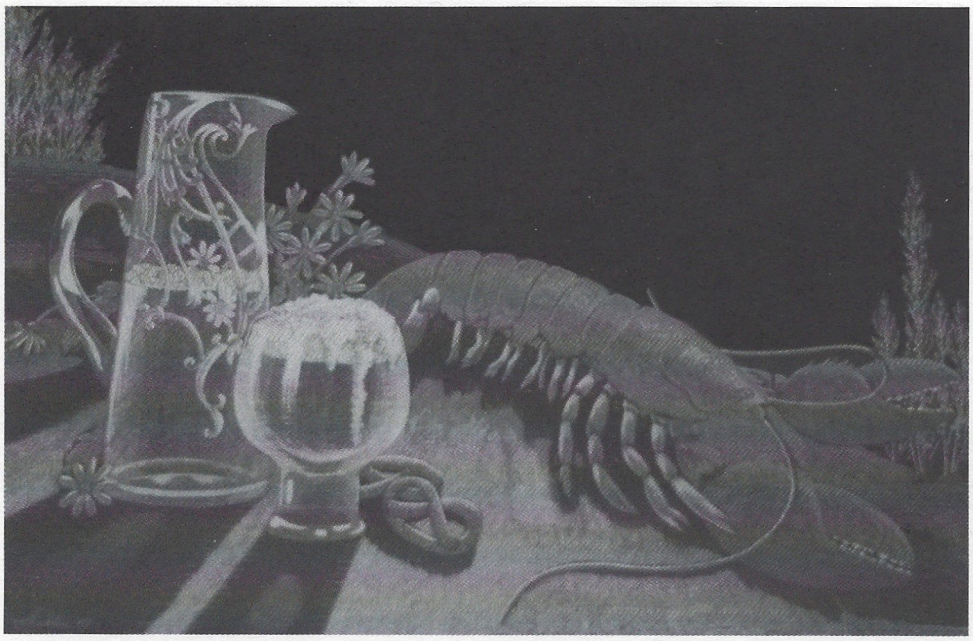
"Incredible detail"

"Great!"

"very intricate, meticulously planned out"

The Shy Couple: Holiday in the Alps

Magnolia Blossom



"I love his style of work! Every painting I saw of his took my breath from me!"

"Awesome!"

"Unique"

"Striking!!"

"Amazing detail!"

Boston beer party

SEPIA WATERCOLOR

Thirty years ago, Norman devised a new method of texturing watercolor paintings. He was using inexpensive watercolors and discovered that he could bleach for highlights and texture using common, household Clorox bleach. He poured the bleach into a small container and used a toothpick dipped into it for such effects. However, after several years, he found that his paintings were fading, so he stopped buying the inexpensive watercolor paints. He switched to the best grade of lightfast watercolor paints he could find, and the problem of fading was solved. But, when using these paints, the Clorox now could not bleach them. After many trials and failures, he finally found that sepia ink would accept bleaching and was lightfast.

With this perfected process, an artist can paint and finish a picture in sepia and apply Clorox for highlights and other textured effects. After the painting is treated and completed, it can be sold as is or tinted with transparent watercolors. The warm base of the sepia harmoniously ties all colors together since it can show through the transparency of the watercolors.

The process can be achieved by following these steps:

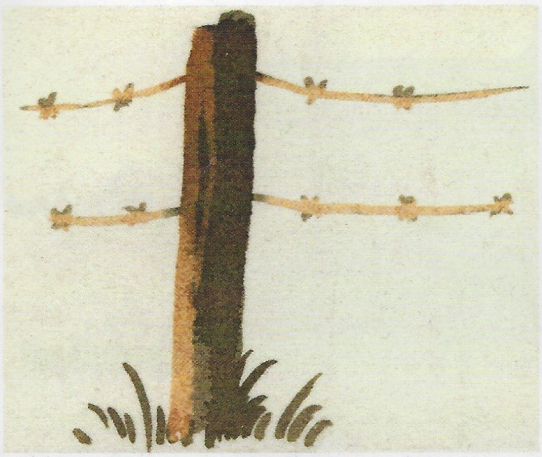
- First, pencil the drawing lightly on white, cold press Illustration Board. It is essential that you use this type of board since the Clorox does not affect it. Most watercolor papers swell up and become rough when using Clorox.
- Paint the entire picture with a true Sepia Ink, such as Pelican Brand sepia ink, for example. Do not use the FW brand; it will not work because it is not a real sepia.
- After the picture has been thoroughly painted, put some Clorox bleach into a small container and use a toothpick to dip into it. Apply the toothpick to all areas you wish to highlight and texturize. [Please follow all precautions regarding using bleach that are found on the container, such as not getting it in your eyes.]
- In the final phase, you can darken or lighten any area. The Clorox allows you to "tune up" your painting.

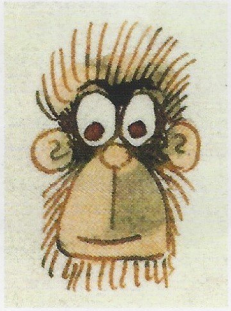
The picture can then be used as is, or can be colored with transparent inks or transparent watercolors. It provides textures that would be difficult to get by any other method.

In regular watercolor, one has to strive to preserve the highlights and whites. In Norman's method, this worry is eliminated since you are able to create highlights after the painting is completed.

– m.w.

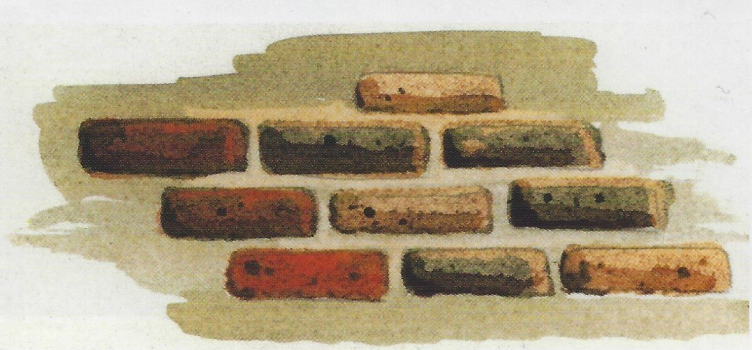
For color examples of Norman's sepia artwork, see pages 65-68





Highlights bleached, no additional color added.

Notice the varying tones that can be created on the bricks using this method which Norman invented.



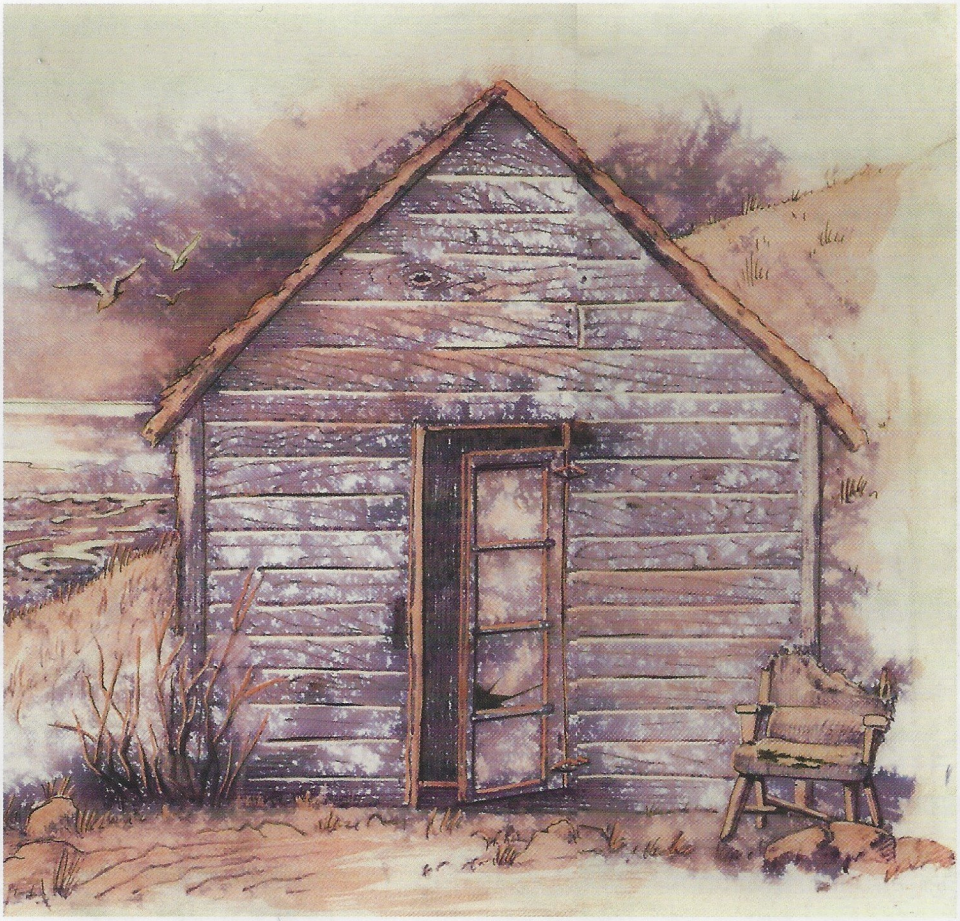
Branch of leaves bleached using the sepia method.

Trees, rocks, and basic landscape. Highlights bleached, some additional color added.

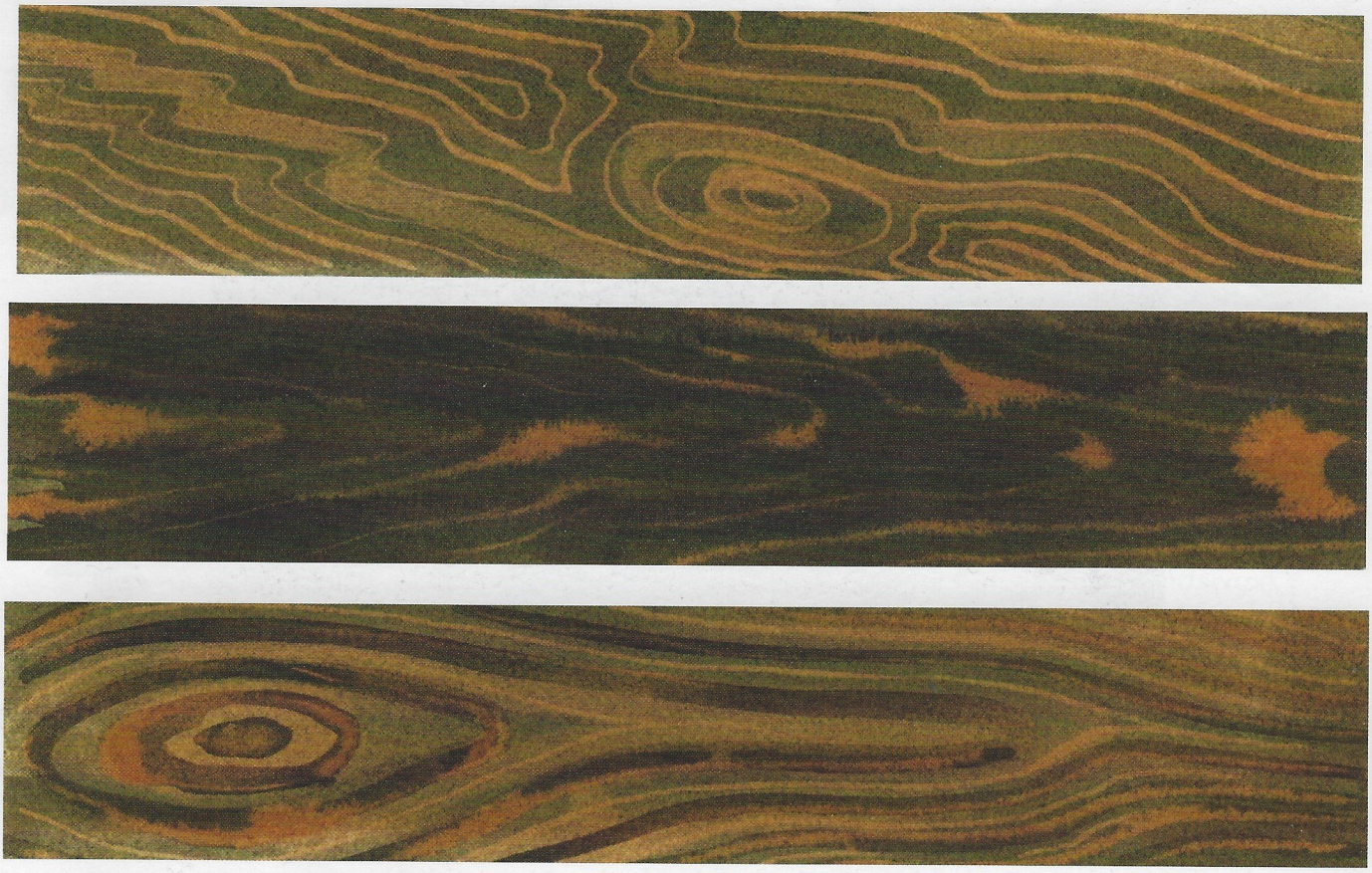
Highlights bleached, additional color added.

Above: entire sepia painting

Below: close-up of cabin



Wood grain . . . sepia, not colored

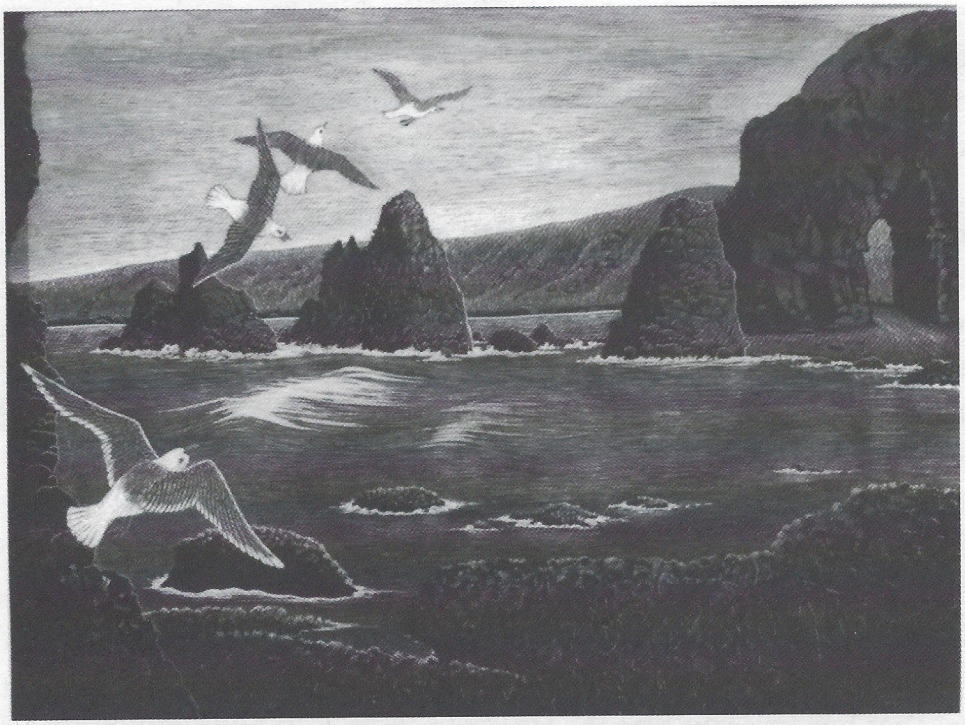


Pheasant in sepia

More of Norman's Art*

"magical"

"WOW!"



"Amazing!!"

"Terrific detail"

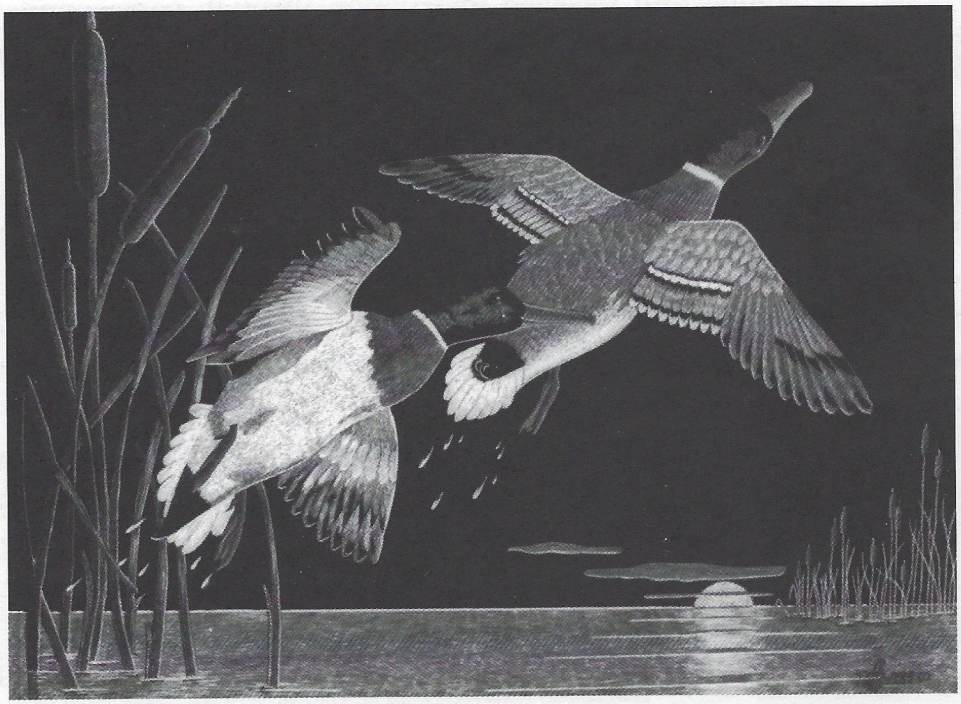
"very beautiful & great details"

Dillon Beach, Northern California

"great composition & style"

"Surprisingly unique — very impressive"

"Awesome crisp lines & color"



"Exquisite!!"

"I like the contrast, the sense of space and depth."

Mallards in Flight

"Norman's talent keeps evolving — a genuine Sonoma County treasure!
His art is a feast for the eyes & senses!
He is not only an incredible artist, but he is a kind, generous, wonderful man."

*The two scratchboard illustrations shown on this page in black and white were originally created in color.

About Norman Gaddini . . .

Well-known and respected as a living treasure in Sonoma County, California, Norman Ernest Gaddini is still vital and active at 91 years young. Besides being a prolific artist whose extraordinary skills and techniques continue to evolve, he also grows breathtaking fuchsias, is an active member of several organizations, and works for hours every day maintaining his extensive garden in the west Sonoma County hills above Freestone.

As you gaze around his home studio, one sees an amazing array of blue, red, white, pink, and sweepstakes ribbons lining his walls. From under his European-style beret, he will joke and say he has no more room on his wall, so he now puts his ribbons in a box. His work ranges from realistic to whimsical, detailed interpretations of his subjects. Despite his years, he consistently continues to collect more accolades and awards, and to produce new work — and it is some of his finest.

Norman works in several media: watercolor, acrylics, pen and ink, and scratchboard. But, it is his "scratching" that has brought him the most recognition. It started in 1975 when Norman was the first artist to add full color to black scratchboard. Today, his work graces galleries and collections around the world.

Born in January 1911, in Healdsburg, California, Norman developed an interest in art at an early age. He studied cartooning and received instruction through correspondence and in high school. However, like many of his generation who came of age during the Great Depression, Norman was encouraged to pursue a more practical career. So, when he enrolled at the University of California at Berkeley, he took only business courses.

During a routine physical examination, a University of California doctor informed Norman that he had a heart murmur. The young man was devastated as he was told that he would not live past his early forties. Despite what he considered to be a "death sentence", Norman continued his studies until his father, a farmer, died in a tractor accident. Accompanied by his brother, Weaver, Norman returned home to run the family apricot and almond farm near Winters, California. The hard work apparently cured his heart, for the murmur disappeared as the years passed by.

Yet, he never forgot his passion for art. Norman painted and drew at every opportunity but was not able to pursue his passion for painting until he and his brother sold their farm in 1970 and he "retired". He and his brother then moved to western Sonoma County. After the move, Norman enrolled in art classes at Santa Rosa Junior College and pursued private instruction from several renowned local watercolor artists.

Norman began to develop his own style. However, a major turning point in his life occurred when he attended an art show at a park in downtown Santa Rosa and discovered scratchboard, a medium which was well suited to his love of detail and realism. Norman relates:

> As an artist, composition and color are of prime importance to me. I prefer realistic work and love details — the more, the better! I think of each new painting as an invention in which the center of interest must be loud and clear. My subject matter is drawn from my travels and my surroundings. Sailing, fishing, gardening, and the varied California landscape are some of the things that inspire me.

I enjoy working in pen and ink, and with acrylics, both in transparent, watercolor, and direct oil techniques, but my special interest, of course, is scratchboard. Many artists have worked in this medium but few have mastered it. When I began adding full color to the black scratchboard in 1975, I was, as far as I know, the first artist to do so. Only a few in the world work with the medium of scratchboard as a fine art, and I am one of a handful who colors it.

Recognition

Norman Gaddini has participated in many shows, exhibitions, and won numerous awards. His work has been exhibited at: Sonoma County Museum (Santa Rosa), Floating Art Show at Pier 3 (San Francisco), Bank of the West (Sebastopol), Q Gallery (Santa Rosa), Vigil Gallery (Nevada City, Santa Rosa), California Museum of Art (Santa Rosa), Trudy's Antiques (Freestone), Vision Sonoma traveling exhibit [Sonoma Land Trust's first juried competition], Negri's Restaurant (Occidental), Golden Apple Ranch (Occidental), Bentley Gallery (Santa Rosa), Lucy's Cafe (Sebastopol), Quicksilver Mine Co. (Sebastopol), and more. He has lectured to the Art Workshop of Sonoma County, Santa Rosa Art Guild, and other groups. He has won awards for his art at the following shows and festivals: Society of Western Artists shows (San Francisco), California State Fair (Sacramento), Sonoma State University invitational show (Rohnert Park), the Atrium (Santa Rosa), Luther Burbank Rose Festival (Santa Rosa), Sonoma County Harvest Fair, Bodega Bay Fisherman's Festival, the Rohnert Park Cultural Arts Annual Art Show, Sebastopol Apple Blossom Festival Art Show, Art Guild shows (statewide), Lodi Annual Art Festival, California North Coast Grape Growers Annual Vineyard and Winery Art Show, Redwood Rancher Art Show . . . and many more.

His talent seems endless! Norman designed the award-winning floriculture exhibits for the Fuchsia Society at the Sonoma County Fair for more than 15 years. He has also illustrated a children's coloring and activity book. In addition, he created the artwork for wine labels for several Sonoma County wineries and vintners, and for a series of custom bookmarks. Since 1996, he has been designing and illustrating a full-page color ad for a prominent Sonoma County wholesale nursery. Norman was also chosen to design and render the acclaimed 1998 and 1999 posters for the renowned Sonoma County Harvest Fair. And, of special note: his artwork is featured in the new book [The New Scratchboard] written by the inventor of Claybord, Charles Ewing.

Learn More About Norman . . . Or Come Meet Him In Person!

You can read about Norman Gaddini on the worldwide web at:

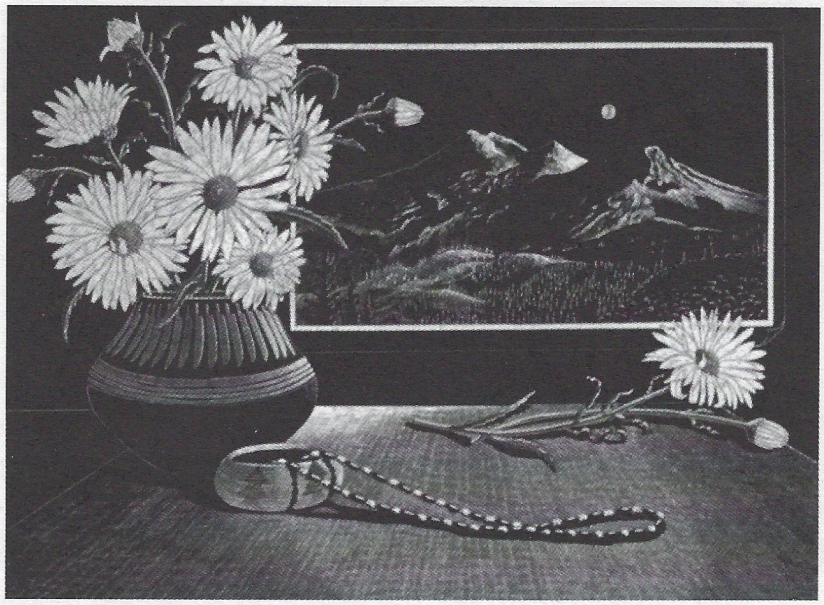
http://www.getyourwordsworth.com/WORDSWORTH-normangaddini.html

Or . . . go to: **http://www.getyourwordsworth.com** and simply click on Norman's picture.

You can come watch him scratch at the oldest art gallery in Sonoma County, the Occidental Fine Art Gallery. It is located in the back patio yard, across the street from the Howard Station Cafe (behind the realty office at 200 Main Street) in Occidental, California.

Gallery hours: most Saturdays and Sundays, and some holidays, 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. On some weekends, Norman participates in local art shows and special events. Telephone ahead to see if the gallery will be open on the day you are planning to come visit: 707-874-3805 or 707-823-3793.

Spanky



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Master Scratchboard Artist Norman Gaddini explains,
from start to finish and in great detail,
the Scratchboard techniques he has developed
in more than 30 years of painting . . . bringing
Scratchboard into the field of fine art.

Scratchboard art is widely utilized in commercial art, especially in the advertising and publishing industries. Students, teachers, professional artists, adventurous amateurs, and Gaddini fans will welcome this instructive manual written in down-to-earth language and generously illustrated.

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